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SHORT STORIES

No. 648.] For the Week Ending June 1st, 1901. [One Penny.

But the figure, still as a statue at first, began moving slowly, remorselessly, towards the bed, with a lifted hand.
See "The Mystery of Grey Towers."

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THE MYSTERY OF GREY TOWERS.

(A Complete Novel.)

By the Author of "The Girl with the Eyelashes," "Through Storm to Sunshine," "Outcast and Heiress," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Arundel Receives.

"How good of you to come to my little party, Mr. Treverne, and so early, too. We can have a charming *tête-à-tête* before the others arrive," and lovely Mrs. Arundel smiled invitingly at the handsome young Englishman, gently detaining his hand the while with a more fervent pressure than courtesy demanded. "Your brother," she added, "is going to honour my little *soirée* to-night."

"He will follow," said he. "There was a letter which he wished to get off by the evening mail. He never misses."

"Ah, you English!" replied Mrs. Arundel, "what a pattern you are to some other nations! How you love your mothers! Lady Branksome must be delighted to receive every day in foggy England a letter from her eldest son in Paris."

"It is not to my mother that my brother writes every day," he answered. "It is to another lady—younger and prettier. Have you not heard that my brother is engaged?" asked the Hon. Frank Treverne carelessly.

"No, indeed, I had not heard," she said. "May I ask who is the lady?"

"Oh, certainly! An affair of long standing," replied Frank Treverne. "It's Elaine D'Arcy, daughter of the old Marchioness of Brentwood—you know, my mother's most intimate friend."

"How interesting! How romantic!" murmured Mrs. Arundel. "And she is doubtless pretty, this Lady Elaine D'Arcy?"

"Pretty? Oh, of course, she's pretty!" answered Treverne. "You see, I've known her since she was a little baby, and perhaps you don't think girls so pretty when you've grown up with them like that. But she certainly is lovely, though not in my style. An English beauty down to the finger tips. Gerald thinks no end of her, and calls her his 'Lily Maid,' but for my part, I find that sort of beauty expressionless," and he showed clearly by his eyes the kind of beauty he did admire.

"Yes?" questioned Mrs. Arundel innocently.

"Indeed I do!" said Frank. "A brunette for me. Dark, blue-black hair, eyes deep and full of fire, a figure tall, erect, strong, like a queen's——"

Mrs. Arundel rose suddenly.

"Hush, Frank?" (never before had she addressed him by his first name). "No more—I hear someone coming."

"I will not stop," replied the young man. Before she could prevent him he had seized her hand. "Venetia, I must speak now—"

There were footsteps on the polished floor outside, the doors were opened wide, and a tall footman announced: "Monsieur et Madame le Comte et la Comtesse de Candale."

Quickly Mrs. Arundel snatched away her hand, which Frank, in his infatuation, would have retained in spite of the world. He bit his lip in fierce vexation, and the two newcomers, who could not help seeing what was taking place as they entered, shot a critical glance at their hostess and the young Englishman.

Others arrived in quick succession, and Frank withdrew to a doorway, where he stood absorbed, following with his eyes every movement of his hostess. Presently she passed him on the arm of a man in uniform. She was going to the card-room to start a game. He followed her with a swift stride.

"Will you allow me to take you for a ride to-morrow?" he asked eagerly. "You will let me come for you to-morrow morning."

"If you are good now—not unless," she whispered.

The rooms were filling fast, and having established some of her guests at the card tables, Venetia Arundel stood again in the outer salon receiving the late arrivals. Frank no longer hung about in doorways, but strolled through the rooms, his heart beating high with hope and joy as he thought of the opportunity so graciously offered him for the morrow.

"It must mean that she cares," he said to himself. "I was an ass to choose such a moment for saying what I have wanted to say so long. But how could I help it when I looked into her glorious eyes!"

A little after midnight he found himself next to the Comte de Candale, who had been supping without that discretion which should mark a peer of France.

The Count clapped him familiarly on the shoulder. Frank retreated a step and looked at him with that glance of icy politeness which only an Englishman can give.

"Congratulate you!" whispered the Count; "Venetia's magnificent! Ever so many men been after her. I don't mind saying that I have myself, only don't tell the Countess! The question is, why should you have hooked her with all her ambition? If it had been your elder brother, now——"

"I forbid you, sir, to speak in that way of Mrs. Arundel," said Frank, pale with anger.

"You take a liberty, sir, which I cannot allow when you address me, a peer of France, in that tone. I permit no one to insult me, certainly not a conceited English fop, who——"

The words ended abruptly with the raising of Frank's fist. For an instant he felt nothing but a wild rush of anger, and a desire to punish on the spot the man who had dared to speak with insolent, profaning lips of the woman he loved; but suddenly he felt a calm, strong touch on his shoulder, and glancing round he found himself face to face with his brother, Lord Branksome, a tall, self-possessed looking young giant, with the face of Antinous, and the figure of Hercules.

Frank's self-possession returned immediately, and

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without taking any further notice of the Frenchman, he turned disdainfully on his heel and walked away by his brother's side.

"What was it all about?" queried Lord Branksome, when they had made their way to another room. "It seems to me, my dear Frank, that I came just in time to prevent an unseemly row. Surely you were not going to hit the fellow in this house, of all places?"

"I'm afraid I was, Gerald," said Frank, half-ashamed, "and it's a jolly good thing you happened to come up at the moment. You know the man?"

"All I want to know. But you haven't yet told me what the row was about?"

"Oh! he spoke slightingly of Mrs. Arundel; familiarly, you know, as if she were a woman of whom

"If you are good now, not unless," she whispered.

a man might talk as he liked. It made me angry," said Frank simply.

"Look here, Frank," Lord Branksome exclaimed hastily, but could say no more, for Mrs. Arundel herself was at his side.

"I have heard only just now," she said in a low tone drawing him a little aside, "of your engagement, and I must heartily congratulate you." She looked at him as she spoke, with earnest, melting gaze.

"I thank you," replied the young man, returning her glance steadily, though few men could look unmoved into the depths of those glorious eyes. "I have been engaged a long time now; Lady Elaine D'Arcy and I have known each other since her childhood; for she is much younger than I."

"How romantic!" murmured the beautiful woman.

Branksome laughed. "Engaged people must get to know each other some time or other, you know, and we happened to know each other early, that's all."

"But it's that which makes the romance," said the lady. "That you should have known each other so long, yet not got tired. And you will soon be married?" she queried gently.

"I hope next autumn," answered Branksome. "Elaine is very young, and though she is quite well now, when she was a child her heart used to give a great deal of alarm to those who loved her. Else, though she is only eighteen, I might have persuaded her to marry me last year."

"How sad! To marry an invalid requires so much love and self-sacrifice. You are noble, Lord Branksome! A weak heart," she went softly on. "Oh! that is terrible, for I have always understood it to be quite incurable."

"Not at all," replied Lord Branksome. "On the contrary, in Elaine's case the trouble tends to disappear as she grows older. She has only to avoid sudden shocks, and not to over-exert herself, and the doctors say that eventually she will quite outgrow the slight weakness that might be left."

Branksome looked round.

"I must find Frank again," he said, "and remind him of an engagement we unfortunately have later. Good-night, Mrs. Arundel; I must thank you for letting us come to you."

To his surprise, he felt the warm, soft hand close on his. He almost started, and as he looked questioningly into her eyes he met there an expression which brought the blood to his forehead.

"Ah, you English; how I admire you!" said Mrs. Arundel in a low tone. "I am only half-English, you know," she went on, "and I have lived almost all my life on the Continent and in South America. I am home-sick for England, and so much wish to visit it again. I—want to see all your beautiful cathedrals—Salisbury, I am told, is one of the most perfect. Is it not so?"

"Really, I'm sorry to say that I'm no great authority on church architecture," said Lord Branksome; "and, perhaps, because Salisbury is so near our place——"

"What!" cried the lady, "Salisbury near your country house? How very interesting! I did not know——"

"Grey Towers is not more than ten miles from Salisbury," he answered, "and on quiet summer evenings, when the wind is in the right direction, we can hear the cathedral bells."

"I have known nothing like it in my life, which has all been passed in cities and in pleasure resorts—so called," she said dreamily. "You will come again," she continued, "before you leave Paris? You will tell me something of English country life? I am not sure that I shall not by-and-bye settle down in England, and devote my fortune to some social schemes."

As the door closed behind the two brothers, Mrs. Arundel gave a sigh that might have been of pain or of relief. She walked rapidly, with her graceful, easy movements, to the gaming-tables, called a servant, from whom she took some cognac and soda-water, laughed with a certain bitterness, and, nodding to the Comte de Candale, she cried:

"The night is young, *mes amis*; let none of you leave till morning. We will play and be merry. Ah, these English! —they weary me."

"Long Years Ago in Old Madrid," the "G. D." was unheard of.

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CHAPTER II.

She's Refused Me.

The two brothers, remarkably alike in person, strolled along the boulevard towards their hotel, and for a time neither spoke. The fresh air was a relief after the scented atmosphere of Mrs. Arundel's apartment, and they enjoyed their walk through the gaiety of the Parisian streets. It was after one in the morning, but the cafés were open, and the life of the Boulevards showed no sign of slackening.

"What do you say to some supper?" asked Lord Branksome suddenly, as they passed a well-known restaurant.

"Supper," he said, "why supper?"

"Chiefly, my dear Frank, because I am hungry, and next because I do not feel inclined to go to bed. You'll come with me?"

"I suppose so," Frank had to admit. "But I can't eat anything. I'll go with you and have a glass of wine, though."

"Come, then; let us go to the Italie," said Lord Branksome. "We are sure to meet someone there we know. What do you think of Mrs. Arundel?"

"Think of her?" cried the young man. "I think of her as I should of an angel, if one of them could inhabit this base earth."

"Have you known her long?"

"Long enough to love her with my whole heart and soul."

"You are taking the affair very seriously, Frank."

"How else should I take it?"

"Has the matter gone far, old fellow?" he questioned in a tone of sympathy. "Don't tell me anything unless you like."

"You know that I have no secrets from you, Gerald. I have loved Mrs. Arundel ever since I first saw her, and that is three weeks ago at the opera. She was with those de Candales, and I was taken to her box by Gwynne, of the Embassy. I think I may say that we struck up a friendship on the spot. She invited me to call. I went and saw her alone. She permitted me to go again, and to take you with me. You know the rest."

"But you haven't asked her to marry you?"

"Not actually, but when I am by her side the words come to my lips without my being able to help it. To-night I lost my head—but we were interrupted before I had said all that I meant to say—interrupted by that cad de Candale, with whom I am thankful you prevented me having a row."

"Who *is* Mrs. Arundel?" asked Gerald.

"I don't know; I don't care," replied Frank. "All I know is that she is the divinest of women."

"You are far gone, my dear brother," said Gerald.

As he spoke a fashionably-dressed young man walked up and touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"Thought I might find you two here," the new-comer remarked, falling into a seat at the brothers' table. "Have come from a boring party at the German Embassy, and looked in for a little distraction before going to bed. Where have you fellows been?"

"At Mrs. Arundel's," replied Lord Branksome.

"Oh, was the fair Arundel entertaining to-night?" queried the young man nonchalantly. "She didn't ask me, though she used to once on a time. I should like to have all the money I've lost at cards in her house."

Frank Treverne drew himself up and looked at the speaker with a pale face.

"You speak lightly of Mrs. Arundel, Gwynne," he said, with a note of danger in his voice.

"And why the dickens shouldn't I?" inquired Gwynne of the British Embassy, staring at Frank with surprise.

"Because the lady is one I admire most profoundly, and I will not allow any man to slight her in my presence."

Gwynne flushed.

"You're not too polite, Treverne," he exclaimed, "and I don't like your tone. If I had known that Mrs. Arundel was such a friend of yours, I wouldn't have spoken of her as I did. That's all."

There was an awkward silence. Frank rose, put on his coat, flung a nod to Gwynne and his brother, and turned to go.

"You'll find me at the hotel," he said. "I'm not quite myself to-night, and should like to be alone for awhile. You'll excuse me," and he was gone.

"I'm afraid I put my foot in it with your brother," observed Gwynne; "but I thought everyone in Paris knew that Mrs. Arundel was no better than a decoy for card-sharpers."

Branksome, who was old-fashioned in his ideas of chivalry, coloured like a boy.

"You'll pardon me, Gwynne," he replied, "if I don't accept what 'everyone' knows. I know Mrs. Arundel—not very well, but well enough to feel sure that she is not what you say. If you don't mind, we'll change the subject."

"By all means," answered Gwynne.

Branksome did not see his brother again that night, nor next morning. His valet told him that Mr. Treverne had breakfasted early and then gone out on horseback. At midday Frank returned, still in his riding clothes, and flung himself into a chair.

"She's refused me," he said. No need to speak a name. Branksome knew well enough who he meant. "So kindly, so sweetly, I can only love her the more, though after what she said I dare feel no hope. I wonder if there's another man in the case. If I thought so—oh, let's leave the place as soon as possible. I hate it."

"There's nothing to keep us here, old boy," he said. And ringing for his man he gave orders that all should be prepared at once for a return to England. He had come abroad for Frank's sake, and he longed to see the face of his "Lily Maid." As for Frank, the sooner he could forget the haunting magic of those dark eyes, the better.

"We shall probably never meet her again," thought Branksome, as the salt wind swept his face on the Channel that night, little guessing, as he so told himself, that at that very moment, the woman whose image was reflected on the surface of his mind, wept with passionate love of him, passionate regret for the loss of him, which even yet, if she schemed aright, might not be quite irrecoverable.

CHAPTER III.

Elaine.

On a bright morning of the new year, almost four weeks after his return from Paris, Branksome was down early as his custom was, for never a day passed, when Elaine D'Arcy was staying in the house, that he did not himself choose her a bunch of fresh flowers from the

"Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" The matter is you're wondering what "G. D." means.

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conservatories to go up to her room before breakfast. Now she had been for a week with his mother, and, with a dozen other friends who made up a Christmas party at Grey Towers, would stop for the Twelfth-night ball. Later, as he came into the great hall, after a walk in the keen frosty air, something soft and sweet fell down from above, well aimed to touch his curly dark head as he passed close under the winding staircase and the overhanging gallery, on his way to the breakfast-room.

He looked up and saw Elaine, who had thrown one of the pink rosebuds he had sent her, and who now smiled down upon him.

A moment more and she had come to him, his flowers thrust into her belt. As she let him take her hands and bend over her, her dainty figure was almost fairy-like in contrast with the tall, strong one of her lover.

It was hardly breakfast time yet, and, to tell the truth, Lady Elaine D'Arcy had come down early on purpose to have a few minutes alone with her lover, who would be sure to be waiting for her. But in her innocent half-child-like way she was a coquette, and so she chose, instead of letting him lead her to the library as he begged to do, to pretend she really must look at her letters, which would be already on the breakfast table.

Sure enough they were there at her place, and picking them up in a most business-like way, she would not permit Branksome to gaze admiringly at her charming profile as she read her correspondence, but made him take up his also.

"I'm sure we look quite like old married people now," she said, laughing provokingly. "But it's *much* nicer as it is."

As they sat thus together by the huge fireplace where the sweet smelling logs of wood crackled, Frank Treverne came in, and after saying something pretty to Elaine, took up his letters with an eager look on his face that Branksome had not seen since those feverish days in Paris.

At the moment of Frank's entrance, he had been on the point of cutting open, with the tiny gold paper-knife which Elaine had given him, a crested envelope addressed in a strange and unmistakably feminine hand.

"Dear Lord Branksome," it began. He glanced down to the bottom of the second page, and saw the name, "Venetia Arundel."

She wondered if he remembered her confiding to him that she hoped to visit England? Well, now she had come. She was at Salisbury, delighting in the quaintness of her surroundings, and, above all, in the glorious cathedral.

He knew that she loved cathedrals. But she could not help feeling lonely, like a foreigner, though she was half-English—indeed, *all* English at heart. A visit from Lord Branksome would cheer her immensely, and would be a kindness to a stranger in a strange land. Might she count upon that kindness—and soon?

"You'll go and see her, won't you, Gerald?" the young man implored. "I've only known she was to be in England for a day or two back. You—you wouldn't be so unfriendly as to stay away?"

There was nothing for it, in the face of such a letter as Venetia herself had written, and Frank's appeal, but to promise that he would call that day, some time, at the White Hart Hotel in Salisbury. But Branksome looked grave when Frank began to intreat that he would "like a dear, good chap, ask the mater to drive over to-morrow, and perhaps invite Mrs. Arundel to the Towers—just to stay over the ball."

"I'm afraid, boy, I can't do that," Branksome said. "She's beautiful and fascinating and all that; and as for myself, I'm awfully pleased to call. But—it's different with mother, and—coming here, you see. It wouldn't be fair to the mater and—Elaine, and the other ladies, knowing so little of her as we do. Now, don't look at me like that——"

But Frank was off, his handsome face frowning and sullen. He knew that it would be no use his asking such a favour of Lady Branksome, who was not fond of making new acquaintances, but for her eldest son she would do anything.

After luncheon, when most of the party had gone driving and Elaine was closeted with an old governess, who had come from miles away to see her, Branksome ordered his favourite horse, and rode away to Salisbury.

Mrs. Arundel had a private sitting-room at the White Hart Hotel, and as she came to him from the adjoining room, holding out both hands half-timidly, the beautiful woman herself appeared indefinably changed. One of her own sex would have known it was because her gown was simpler, the dressing of her hair less elaborate—that altogether she was playing another part, one more suited to the new life which she wished to enter.

Apparently by the merest accident they drifted into speaking of her past. With tears in her voice and her great eyes, she was telling him how cruel had been the mistake she had made in the early marriage, into which she had been forced when fresh from school in a Spanish convent. How wretched she had been in the set to which her marriage had introduced her—racing men, gamblers to whom she had been obliged to be civil, or suffer from her husband's anger.

"I had no women friends," she said in a low quivering voice. "No one to help me—I have no one now. I could not escape, even after his death, from the old circle, though I was so miserable, feeling always I had it in me to be different—nobler, if I only had the chance. Now there is some hope for me in England, perhaps. Oh, Lord Branksome—you could help me so much if you would. Don't be frightened for your brother. Charming as he is, I don't love him in the right way, and I promise you that you, or your mother, Lady Branksome, have nothing to fear from me. Would she come to see me? or is that too much to ask?"

With those soft eyes, welling tears, raised to his, Branksome found himself saying exactly what he had meant not to say. Certainly he would ask his mother to call. And then—yes, actually he was mumbling something about an invitation to the Towers for the Twelfth-night ball.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWELFTH-NIGHT BALL.

LADY BRANKSOME called the next afternoon on Mrs. Arundel, and asked her to come for three days to Grey Towers to stay for the Twelfth-night ball. Three days seemed but a short period to accomplish all that Venetia wished to accomplish; yet she felt that it must be then or never, and she had a confidence in herself that was not ill-placed.

Elaine, who was Frank's confidant, grieved with him over

"Take this Letter to My Mother," it's to ask her what "G. D." means.

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his disappointment, hoped with unworldly kindness of heart that it might yet be turned into joy, and felt a girlish curiosity to see the beautiful Mrs. Arundel.

It was not quite by accident that she happened to be standing by Frank's side at the great front entrance of the old house when the carriage bringing the interesting stranger arrived; and Venetia's first impression of the rival she meant to displace was of a slight figure in grey cloth and grey fur, cheeks rosy with excitement and exercise, hair shining like gold in the sunset, and eyes soft and sweet as violets.

It was tea time, and Lady Branksome was in the great hall, where presently Lord Branksome appeared, with various members of the house party; and Mrs. Arundel's *début* in English society was accomplished.

Some of the men thought her more beautiful even than Lady Elaine D'Arcy, though, of course, she looked, and was, very much older; but the women were more slow in making up their minds. She was not of "their set," consequently they were inclined to regard her with a certain suspicion.

But as time went on, the coldest of her critics unbent. She dressed quietly, spoke quietly, and seemed to choose the society of her own sex, rather than use her charms to win the admiration of the men.

As for Elaine, the beautiful woman exercised a curious fascination over her, which the girl could not define, still less resist. Venetia petted her, and flattered her, not in words, but by looks and actions. "Never," said Mrs. Arundel, "in all her lonely life, had she met anyone to whom her heart drew so irresistibly. Would Elaine have her for a faithful, loving friend—none the less true because her affection had been born in the first moment of their meeting?"

Naturally, Elaine said "Yes," and wondered at her lover because he did not seem exactly anxious to promote the friendship. Afterwards, she was to guess at a reason for his conduct which would go near to break her heart.

On the morning of the great event the house party became complete, numbering nearly forty in all; and several hundred invitations had been sent out and accepted.

Branksome danced the first dance with his "Lily Maid," a wonderful vision all in white, with pearls he had given her; and when he asked Mrs. Arundel for a waltz he was too late, for she was engaged to Frank for that and several others. However, there was a dance after supper she would save for him, if—he cared. "She would like to dance with him once," she said softly; and though Branksome had wished to ask Elaine for that particular waltz, hoping she would sit out with him and rest, she had not promised it, and therefore he could not well withstand Mrs. Arundel's graciousness.

A curious presentiment of trouble was in his heart as the music for the dance began; perhaps because the air was a wild and sad one, he told himself. He felt a sensation as of a cold weight of lead in his heart, as he went to claim his beautiful partner.

She was in black and gold, and earlier in the evening the brilliant colour in her face had contrasted strikingly with the dusk of her low-cut gown; but now she was pale, and her great eyes shone like jewels.

"I am tired," she said. "Forgive me if I have changed my mind and don't want to dance. Will you take me to the conservatory? I want to rest where it is dim and cool—and where I can't see the crowd—only you."

He led her to the conservatory according to her wish.

The waltz was a popular one, and for the moment nobody else was there. The spot that Mrs. Arundel chose was the most softly lighted, the most retired of all the many nooks arranged especially for *tête-à-têtes*.

Hardly were they seated behind the friendly shelter of a huge palm when, to Branksome's bewildered amazement, Venetia suddenly covered her face with her hands, uttering a low sob. The soft pink light touched rosily the marble of her uncovered neck and arms.

He was embarrassed—confused—yet his duty was to console her. "You are tired, indeed, Mrs. Arundel!" he exclaimed. "Let me——"

"Ah, no!" she whispered. "It is not that. Can't you see—don't you know that my heart is breaking? I oughtn't to have come here. I can't bear it any more."

"Mrs. Arundel," he stammered, "what has happened in my house to grieve you?"

The white ungloved hands stole away from the glorious face. Tears hung on her lashes. She touched his arm with her fingers—that thrilled and quivered.

Her beauty was unearthly—yet not of heaven.

"My own foolishness, my own madness has happened, that is all," she said. "I thought I could endure it. I thought I could school myself to see the only man I ever loved beside the girl he is to marry, but I had not guessed how cruelly hard it would be. Oh, Lord Branksome, don't scorn me. I am asking nothing of you, but I must speak out what is in my heart—or die. Pity me—pity me, for my life is broken."

Very gently he took her hand which rested upon his arm, and after pressing it in a frankly friendly way, laid it upon her lap. "You are weary after this long evening, dear Mrs. Arundel," he said, as though completing his first sentence. "You don't know what you are saying, and I shall forget as though I had never heard it. Now let me take you out by a quiet way, without going through the ball-room; and when your maid has bathed your eyes, you will be ready, if not for the next dance, for the one after that, for your partners can spare you no longer."

So speaking, he rose, and she rose also, though there was a tumult in her breast.

"Oh, how I hate that child who holds him!" she said within her mind. "It *must* be that he loves me. Only honour keeps him true to her. What is she to weigh in the balance against my beauty, my worship for him? I've one more card to play yet, and for his happiness as well as mine I will not hesitate."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. ARUNDEL PLAYS TRUMPS.

LADY ELAINE D'ARCY was a considerate girl, and she had insisted upon her maid going to bed, saying that she much preferred undressing herself after the ball.

She was in her white *robe de chambre*, her thoughts straying to Branksome, and something constrained and uneasy in his manner, as she slowly brushed the yellow hair that curled below her waist, when she started at the sound of a faint tap on the door.

Going to it, she flung it open to see Venetia Arundel, in billowing lace and creamy silk, with fallen masses of ebony hair.

"The Heart Bowed Down" will be lifted next week when "Short Stories" explains the "G. D." mystery.

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"May I come in?" asked the elder woman. "I won't keep you long, but I had to see you."

Poor little Elaine was tired; but she was too generous, too kindly, to turn her new friend away.

"What a quaint, delightful room!" she exclaimed. "I've often wanted to come before, but never dared."

"It is one of the oldest rooms in the house, this favourite tower nook of mine," Elaine answered, "though it is supposed to be haunted, and there is a terrible story connected with the place; but, you see, I'm sensible, and not a bit superstitious."

Stooping she tried the lid. It opened, and disclosed antique draperies, brocades, and velvets, of a long past fashion.

"Tell me the story, won't you?" begged Venetia. "By whom is this room in the west tower haunted?"

Elaine smiled.

"Oh, if you must hear the gruesome story—and so late at night, too! It is said to be haunted by one Lady Branksome of a long past day. She used to live all alone with her servants, to be as far as possible from her husband. There was a quarrel between them which neither would ever make up. She was very jealous, and she accused him of paying too much attention to a pretty maid in the house.

"He sulked for months, and would not come near her. The maid was not dismissed, as the wife had demanded, and one day, when Lord Branksome was intoxicated, he was heard to say that he wished Lady Branksome were dead, that he might marry the girl. Next morning, when her servant went to call her, Lady Branksome was found dead in her bed in this very room."

Elaine looked round dramatically as she spoke.

"And since then her ghost, they say, haunts the tower, where she is seen coming out of the next room, passing the corridor, wringing her hands, and entering here. Lord Branksome was tried for murdering his wife, though there were no marks on the body, and some of the doctors said that she might have died a natural death, but he was acquitted by his peers for want of evidence. The horrid old man did not marry the serving-maid, for only a week after he was thrown from his horse and killed."

Elaine finished, her voice, despite herself, falling to a tragic whisper. She had said that she was not superstitious, and she had spoken the truth; still, she had never told the story to anyone at dead of night before; and, suddenly, as she talked on, fascinated by Mrs. Arundel's pale face and wide dark eyes, a curious shudder ran through her slight body, shaking her from head to foot. For the first time she felt a sensation of nervous dread, at the thought of being left alone in the darkness in this, her favourite room. "Shame upon you, foolish girl!" she said to herself. "As though dear old Mary were not just overhead—and Lion sleeping in the alcove."

So she reassured herself, not willing to remember that supposing there were such things as ghosts, neither faithful Mary nor brave Lion could defend her from the terror. Still she could not banish from her mind the remembrance of a certain portrait hanging in the picture gallery, an image, oddly enough, called up by the white face and great eyes of Mrs. Arundel. There was no real likeness between the two countenances; but both were pale, surrounded by loose black hair, and lighted by eyes almost terrible in their dark glitter.

Venetia glanced over her shoulder. "You are brave indeed!" she whispered. "But I—I am half-Spanish. I look on things differently. Women in my family have sometimes had the gift of second sight. I do not *think*—I *know*—that spirits do come back to earth and haunt the scene of their own or other's crimes. My mother once said—but no! why should I frighten you? It is not likely that a child like you would be troubled even at this time of year, when they say that spirits walk—after that sacred day you English call 'All Hallow's Eve' until after Twelfth Night. Still, suppose that the old oak panelling behind all these beautiful tapestry hangings should open, that a figure should steal forth, shining with unearthly light? What would you do? Would you then be as brave as you are now?"

Elaine shook her head until all the golden tendrils over her brow might have been fairy bells, ringing out a fairy chime. She tried to laugh. "Oh, if anything so horrible happened, I shouldn't be brave at all, but a coward. If I saw such a sight in the darkness I think I should surely die; for though I am well, and almost quite strong, I have still a heart that plays me strange tricks sometimes—less often every year. But the doctor says until I have entirely outgrown the old weakness I must avoid all shocks; and though he did not tell me so himself, I once overheard Lady Branksome warning Mary to be careful of me, as Dr. Passmore had said a serious fright would probably kill me."

"The Minstrel Boy to the War has Gone," thinking about the "G. D."

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"Well, I know that for all the money in the Bank of England I would not sleep here alone; but you have a better-regulated mind than I have, my dear, as well as cooler blood," said Venetia. Perhaps before her mental vision also rose a presentiment of that old portrait of the murdered Lady Branksome in the picture-gallery, for she had seen it, and, questioning Frank regarding its history (because of a certain resemblance she fancied to herself), she had been told the very story Elaine had repeated to-night, thereupon forming the plan whose execution she regarded now as "playing her last card."

"Don't look so frightened," cried Elaine, regaining courage; "if you do, I shall feel almost capable of imagining I see the ghost myself in the darkest hour before the dawn."

"Hush!" Venetia Arundel raised a warning finger her eyes larger and blacker than ever. "What was that? Didn't you hear it?" She seemed to be looking through the very walls of oak and stone; then, rising hastily, she glided to a corner of the room, and, lifting the tapestry that covered the ancient wainscotting, she laid her ear against the wood.

The "Lily Maid" was quite herself again now. Half-laughing, half-annoyed, she rose also from her seat beside the dying fire. "What nonsense!" she exclaimed. "If you heard anything it was a rat. I daresay there are whole families in the old wainscotting."

Venetia remained for an instant with the tapestry in her hand. "Yes, this is the right place," she rapidly told herself, her heart beating triumphantly; while aloud she said: "Forgive me! But it was really like a light step behind the panelling, and the sweep of silken draperies. 'Nonsense,' as you say, yet everything seems possible in this old house, and for a moment I was startled."

Venetia dropped the tapestry, and coming close to the girl laid her large beautiful hands on the slight shoulders.

"I have been talking foolishly, have I not, dear girl? But it was because I haven't made up my mind yet to saying what I came here to say. I wonder—oh, I wonder how I am to do it?"

Elaine looked up into the dark face in surprise, for the elder woman's voice suddenly had become low and tragic.

"There's something I want to tell you," Venetia went on, "because I love you, dear, and we are friends, aren't we?"

With her little childish hands she drew Venetia down on a big cushiony chintz sofa beside her.

"Of course we are friends," she said, "and you may trust me."

"Trust you never to tell anyone on earth what I am going to say to you—to hint to no one, not even—Lord Branksome?"

Elaine hesitated—perhaps touched with a vague presentiment.

"I—I should hardly like——" she began, but Venetia impetuously cut her short.

"Ah, then, I must go away without having spoken!" she cried with something like a sob, and Elaine's tender heart reproached her.

Believing without a doubt that the confidence to come concerned either Frank Treverne or possibly some event in Mrs. Arundel's past of which she felt impelled to speak, Elaine no longer held back her promise.

"Very well," she said, "I will tell nobody in the world what passes between us."

"You swear it?"

Elaine lifted her proud little head.

"My word is enough," she answered. "I have never broken it, and never will."

"Elaine," she said softly, calling the girl for the first time by her name, "I am going now to test your strength and courage. You will need both, I fear. Ah, I would spare you this if I could, but it is better that you should know it before it is too late, that you may be spared the bitterness I suffered when I was an innocent young girl like you, in marrying a man who—did not love me."

Lady Elaine D'Arcy did not comprehend. *She* was going to marry a man who worshipped her, as she worshipped him—they had been all in all to each other for years. What did Mrs. Arundel mean by speaking of the two cases together?

"I don't understand you," she faltered. "I—did you not wish to speak of yourself and Frank? Why should I need strength and courage to hear anything you can have to tell me?"

"Because," and Venetia took both the little hands, that were growing cold now, "because I must hurt you—let you know the truth, which is, that Lord Branksome does not care for you as he has tried to make you believe. Perhaps he did once, or thought he did, but now—oh, men are all like him, fickle and false for the first face that takes their fancy! I never dreamt how it would be, or I would not have come to this house. In Paris, to be sure, there were a few words, but I did not know then he was engaged, and I fancied he was only flirting a little. Then he asked his mother to call when I was in Salisbury—it was all his doing, you know, and I came here when she had invited me, hoping to be so happy.

"But the very first night I arrived, he sent me a letter—such a letter!—by my maid. I did not answer it, for already I loved you, and pitied you. I would have gone away if I could, but that would have been impossible without making gossip. The only thing was to ignore what had happened. But to-night I can do so no more. You saw him take me to the conservatory, instead of dancing? You were looking at us, I know. He begged me to run away with him, offered to throw you over to-morrow, called you a child—a little wax doll—compared with me. I got away from him when I could, and at first I meant to leave this house in the morning without telling you. But I felt that would be doing wrong. It was my duty, hard as it must be for both, to let you hear the truth, and save you, perhaps, from a wretched loveless life."

So tempestuous had been the torrent of her utterances that Elaine had not been able to stem it with a word. But she sprang up at last, facing Venetia with eyes blazing like sapphires, a carnation stain on either cheek.

"I won't believe it!" she cried. "I won't believe it. I thought you were a good woman, but I ——"

"You must believe it!" broke in Venetia. "I risked your anger for your own good. I would not have spoken without proof. Read this letter—for my own justification, I insist."

Her great eyes compelled the girl's obedience, hypnotizing her against her will to take the sheet of paper which was thrust into her hands. Then the words

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written there seemed to print themselves in fire on her brain, without her own volition. She did not mean to read Gerald's letter to another woman (for now, despite herself, she did believe that it was his) but she could not help it.

"My beautiful, glorious Venetia," she read. "You have made a madman of me. It has come to this—that I cannot live without you. Is a child to stand between me and a woman like you? She will forget me in a week, but with me, you and life are one. It cannot be that I love you so without waking some return in your heart. Give me some hope to exist upon. I will throw over everything for you——"

Elaine saw no more, for a ruddy mist came between her eyes and the paper, only the signature: "Yours till death and after,—GERALD."

The letter fell from her hand, and as it fluttered to the floor, Venetia Arundel caught it, and flung it into the fire. It was a singularly clever forgery, for she had a skilled hand, and was playing for high stakes. It had taken her quite two hours to write by the aid of a formal little note from Branksome, written in Paris and kept till now; but it had served its mission, and must be destroyed before it could work her harm, instead of good.

"Do you believe now, my poor, poor child?" she questioned gently, laying caressing fingers on the girl's white arm.

Elaine started, as though she had been stung by an adder.

"Do not touch me," she commanded. Then the fire died from her eyes and her head dropped. "I don't mean that," she faltered; "it—it isn't your fault. You have done right to tell me."

"Oh, thank you for those words!" passionately breathed Venetia. "I am rewarded for the cruellest task of my life. But—to show me that you forgive, confide in me what you intend to do."

"I will see Ger—Lord Branksome to-morrow, and—give him his freedom."

"Ah, no!" ejaculated the elder woman. "You forget, you promised me before I spoke that you would not breathe a word of what I was about to tell you."

"I thought then your confidences were to be all about yourself. If I had dreamt——"

"Still, I hold you to your word, which you said just now had never been broken."

"Then," answered Elaine, "I will keep my promise. I will merely tell him that our engagement must end, and refuse to explain."

"What a child you are, my poor *petite!* As though he would not force you to explain—you don't know men as well as I. The only way is to write—to-night, and not see him again before you go, as of course your pride will compel you to, even as my honour compels me. If you wish to punish him for the wrong and the slight he has put upon you, you will write and hide from him. You should write a proud letter—a stinging letter—that will make him see at least you are a woman, not to be despised as a child. Ah, what a letter *I* could write to such a man were I in your place!"

"But I cannot," said Elaine. "I am not a woman like you, and I don't know how to sting or torture him, even if——" She stopped.

"Then let me dictate to you a letter that he can never forget to his dying day, because of its reticences, to bewilder and goad him. It is right that you should have your revenge."

"No," Elaine began; but Venetia Arundel's eyes fascinated her.

"You will write what I advise, will you not, dear child?" she commanded, rather than implored, never removing her eyes from Elaine's.

"Yes," said the girl dreamily, "I will write."

"Then come with me to your desk, and I will tell you what is best to say."

She slid her arm round Elaine's waist, and they moved together to the pretty davenport by one of the windows.

"Be seated, sweet one. Say: 'I am growing more tired every day of this engagement of ours. It was begun when I was too young to understand my own heart. I do not approve your conduct of late; I approve nothing that you do. I have thought the matter over carefully, and have concluded that it will be better for us to part. I thank Heaven that I have found courage to say this before it is too late.—ELAINE D'ARCY.'"

The girl sat with the pen in her hand, but did not obey until Venetia's soft hands and Venetia's piercing gaze had done their work again.

"Give the letter to me, dear," Mrs. Arundel said. "I must pass Lord Branksome's room to reach my own, and I will put it under his door. Then he will know, when he first wakes in the morning, that he can cozen and cheat you no longer. Now, my darling child," she said soothingly, "rest if you can, knowing you have done the right thing."

Once more she laid her hand on the girl's forehead, keeping it there until the eyes closed.

"Think that I am right," she murmured insistently. "Keep it in your mind that I have made you do the right thing."

With a long, parting gaze she glided away, leaving Elaine sitting at the desk, her head bowed, and her gleaming lengths of hair veiling her little figure.

When Venetia had gone, she did not move, but sat still as she was, while the moments passed, and the tall old clock in the corner ticked placidly on, and the embers dropped in the fireplace.

She took a few steps toward the door, swayed as a lily sways in a summer storm, and had only time to stagger to the bed, when she lost consciousness.

KNOW WHAT THE "G. D." IS?
SEE NEXT WEEK'S
Short Stories.

CHAPTER VI.

HER LAST CARD.

IF Elaine had succeeded in going to Mrs. Arundel's room, she would not have found her there. Venetia had that to do which brooked no delay, and every detail of her plan had been carefully laid. Should she fail, there was not much hope that the letter she had extorted from Lord Branksome's *fiancée* would serve its purpose. If Elaine were alive and at Grey Towers in the morning, her lover would seek her; there would certainly be an explanation, despite the hard-won promise, for Branksome was not a man to accept dismissal without a struggle.

She did indeed intend to "help" Elaine away from Grey Towers; but it was the spirit which was to

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go, not the body. That might stay for all Venetia cared when her work was accomplished. She did not mean to murder the girl—oh no; it would be as unnecessary as disagreeable, she hoped, to soil her hands with a crime. But for all that, the "Lily Maid" was to be "helped away," as she had said; and the letter would no doubt so greatly aid Lord Branksome in bearing his sudden loss that his conscience might soon allow him to seek consolation from one most ready to give it.

"He *must* love me," she repeated to herself as she sped away from Elaine's bedroom. "How could he have seen me, and known my worship for him, yet still keep faith in his heart with a puny, cold child like that? Impossible! He is mine, or shall be—and what I do to-night, I do for him as well as myself."

As the woman passed through the corridor which separated Elaine's room from the rest of the house, the clock in the east tower struck four.

"It is well," she thought. "Everyone is in bed, and I need have no fear."

The passage was lighted by a softly shaded electric lamp, and when Mrs. Arundel had slipped Elaine's letter under the door of Lord Branksome's room, she went on beyond her own until she gained the head of the main staircase, where she again stood and listened. Not a sound reached her ears, and she proceeded along the corridor until she came to a small winding staircase which led upwards.

"How clever it was of me to persuade Frank into showing me the chests with the costumes of his dusty ancestors. It was the one link in the chain that was missing, and now, as I know so well where to find what I want, even that is complete. He little guessed the purpose to which that one of the dresses in which I took most interest would soon be applied."

Venetia quickly ascended the winding stair until she found herself at a door which closed the way. Pushing this gently, it yielded, and she passed through into a long, dark corridor, where it was quite dark, but she took a box of matches from the pocket of her *robe de chambre*, and, lighting one, proceeded cautiously.

Doors opened off on the right and left, but Mrs. Arundel held straight on until she reached the last upon the right. Gently turning the handle of the door, it opened, and she slipped in, closing and locking the door behind her. She found herself in a large room, with old boxes and chests ranged along the walls, and after a moment's hesitating glance, she walked straight to a large and ancient receptacle bound with curious brass-work. Stooping, she tried the lid. It opened, and disclosed antique draperies, brocades, and velvets of a long past fashion. "Fortune favours me," she said to herself. "I need not waste time with the keys I brought. I was sure I had got Frank away without locking it, but there was the bare chance that someone had come up into the attic afterwards. Now the ghost of the murdered Lady Branksome shall be tricked out right royally."

Kneeling down, Mrs. Arundel lifted from the chest a skirt and bodice with ruffs and laces and head-dress, and bore them to her room, where she quickly dressed herself in the old Stuart gown. The costume fitted her well enough, and as she looked at herself in the long mirror she smiled. Her masses of black hair were taken up and combed flat on her head, where an old-fashioned tiara held them in place. A plentiful use of powder applied to her face gave her a deadly, ghost-like pallor, from which the great dark eyes shone out with unnatural light.

"It's a bold game," Mrs. Arundel murmured, as she gazed at her image, well pleased with the change in her appearance, "but I'll carry it through. I am playing for a great stake—the man I love and a title. That little girl is not to be considered. Who is she that she should stand in my path? And I love Gerald—love him with all the power of my heart and soul. With this Dresden china doll out of the way what a life there is before us—Gerald and me!" She lost herself for a time in dreaming, and awoke with a start as the tower clock boomed half-past four.

"Now is the time," she whispered. "The girl will have cried herself to sleep, like the baby she is. I have already frightened her well about the ghost, and she, poor coward, has told me that the sight of it must surely stop for ever the beating of that weak heart of hers. Yes, luck has favoured me so far; may it be so to the end! And it must be—it shall be—even if—if the ghost's fingers must stop her breath as well. Yet I hope it won't come to that. The death by fright will be the simplest; it leaves no traces, and I can get through the secret panel and back to this room before there can be any alarm, scream she ever so loudly."

She gave another long look at herself in the glass, then cautiously opened her door and stepped out, closing if after her. It was but three or four steps from her room to a small recess in the oak wainscotting of the hall, in which was a sliding panel that led to a narrow passage communicating with Elaine's bedroom, and passing thence down a stairway out to the garden, as Frank had mentioned among other details of interest, concerning the historic old house that was his home. Few even of the servants at Grey Towers knew of the existence of this secret way, for it had not been thought advisable that nervous subjects should be needlessly frightened. But Frank Treverne, when showing Mrs. Arundel round the old house soon after her arrival, had not been able to resist her coaxing, or the temptation of telling the woman he loved how to slide back the panel in the hall.

With extended right hand, Mrs. Arundel felt for the groove in the oak wainscotting which would make the door slide back. The simple mechanism was in good order, and a slight pressure of her finger caused the doorway to open. Mrs. Arundel stepped within, and quietly closed it behind her. She was now in a narrow passage, so narrow, indeed, that there was but just room for her to walk.

She advanced cautiously until she judged that she must have reached the position of Elaine's bedroom, and then, trusting to the thickness of the oaken walls not to betray her, she struck a match, which cast its light along the wall. A projecting knob caught her attention, and she felt sure that this must be the means of sliding back the door which led into Elaine's room.

Composing her face into a rigid, ghostly stare, she raised aloft one beckoning white hand, and with the other pushed back the panel.

It slid noiselessly in its groove, and by the dying fire-light, which shed a faint red radiance in the room now that the candles had burnt out, Mrs. Arundel could see that Elaine was lying on the bed, dressed in the same white *robe de chambre* which she had worn an hour earlier.

"Father O'Flynn, you've a Wonderful Way wid Yer," but interpret "G. D." if you can.

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Elaine was not asleep.

"Ah, if it should have been only a horrible vision!" she thought. "How happy I should be, how thankful! To have morning come, not the beginning of a wretched striving to live without him, and never to show I cared, but to know that he was mine as he always has been.

A moment more and she had come to him, his flowers thrust into her belt.

that no shadow had come between us, to put us for ever apart."

Tears stole from under her long, curled lashes, and she let them fall unregarded.

She dared not go to Venetia now, for she did not know how long a time might have passed since she had fainted; and supposing that she had dreamt Mrs. Arundel's visit, what excuse could she make for rousing her from sleep at such an hour? At least, however, she could not lie still until morning; she moved restlessly, and as she stirred, something else stirred.

There was a slight clicking sound. Then a soft rustling as of a woman's draperies, and a deep, long sigh.

Elaine's eyes opened widely; for a moment she lay absolutely motionless, listening with strained hearing, doubting her own ears.

Surely she had fancied the silken rustling. The ghost story that she had talked of with Venetia—no doubt that had keyed her imagination to this uneasy pitch.

But then—had that talk been real, or only a dream? If it was real, then all the rest must be so, too.

Again there came that low, mysterious sigh, and a rich "weep, weep" of silk that trailed across the floor. There was a faint, disagreeable odour, also, like phosphorus.

Elaine grew cold as ice, and her heart knocked like a hammer against her side. She felt as though her limbs were turning to stone, and yet she must move, she must see the thing that stared and breathed in the ruddy dusk.

With a violent effort, which seemed to tear nerve and muscle, she forced herself to turn, then to sit up, and look in the direction from which the stealthy noises came.

There was just enough firelight left to throw up out of the shadows a white face, indistinctly featured, a form that seemed to tower unnaturally tall, beyond the common height of woman, while the horror was increased by a dim gleaming which streaked the hair and the folds of quaintly-fashioned drapery.

It was the ghostly presentment of the old portrait in the great gallery, from which Elaine had always turned away her eyes.

For a long moment that seemed an hour Elaine stared at the vision, frozen with horror, yet striving to believe the sight a mere trick of her imagination. But the figure, still as a statue at first, began moving slowly, remorselessly toward the bed, with a lifted hand, and pointed fingers tipped with sparkling, pallid light.

Elaine's senses reeled, and uttering a wild cry of extremest terror that went echoing through the house, her heart contracted with a sudden, wrenching pain, and she fell back again into unconsciousness.

A laugh broke from the lips of the ghost; but scarcely had the tall figure turned to flee with haste towards the open panel, when a growl of rage followed the scream and the cruel laugh, and a huge yellow and white body bounded after. With a spring, Lion, the St. Bernard, had leapt upon the graceful shoulders, and had borne the apparition to the ground.

Despite his victim's shrieks and desperate struggles, he held her down with two gigantic paws, and buried his teeth in the round, polished throat, choking the wild cries into incoherent mutterings.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD BRANKSOME had not gone to bed. The scene with Venetia Arundel had been a disturbing one, and a presentiment of trouble was in his mind.

He could not be unchivalrous to a woman and a guest, no matter how shamefully she had forgotten herself, yet he could scarcely endure, after what had passed, that she should remain even for another four-and-twenty hours under the same roof with the girl he loved, and whom she had tried to wrong. Exactly what he had dreaded he had not known; but he was thankful for Frank's sake, as well Elaine's and his own, that Mrs. Arundel's visit would end on the morrow.

Never had he loved Elaine so dearly as he did that night, when he so clearly saw the contrast between her sweet purity and Venetia's selfish abandonment. For a moment it had seemed to him, as he bade his "Lily Maid" good-night, that he must warn her against Mrs. Arundel; but he had checked himself for what he

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felt to be honour's sake, as the words had sprung to his lips.

Feeling no inclination for sleep, he had thrown a great-coat over his evening things, and gone out, late as it was, to cool the heat of his blood with a walk in the wintry night air.

Scarcely conscious of the way he took, he had wandered for a couple of miles under the frost-gemmed trees of the park before he told himself that it was time to go back to the house.

Suddenly a strange impatience seized him. He felt impelled to return with all haste, he knew not why.

At last the tower which was called by family consent Elaine's came in sight. He looked up wistfully at the windows. "My little white darling—'my Lily Maid!'" he said to himself, half-aloud.

As he so thought a wild cry rang out to the night, and he knew the voice was Elaine's.

What followed was vague and confused to his mind. He had no recollection afterwards of getting into the house or hurrying to the tower. He only knew that presently he was there, and that the door of Elaine's room was open, the old woman who had been the girl's nurse wringing her hands and wailing for help upon the threshold.

"I can't wake her—she's dead! That awful woman has killed her!" were the words that pierced Branksome's ears and his heart, as he pushed his way past the stout form, and strode into the room, followed by Frank, who had been awakened by the scream.

"Elaine! Elaine!" he cried, and the voice she loved waked her from unconsciousness, and she answered him from the bed where she still lay.

"Great Heaven, it's Mrs. Arundel!" he ejaculated, and as Elaine, hearing the words, and seeing with dazed eyes the thing that was happening, cried to Branksome to save Venetia from the dog, he sprang forward, and caught the now savage animal by the collar. "Let go, Lion, let go!"

For a horrible moment the dog would not obey, but shook his victim back and forth by mangled throat and cheek, while her hands fluttered helplessly.

To Elaine, as she regained her senses, the sound of Mrs. Arundel's name came as a revelation. A word from her, and the great dog loosed the quivering woman on the floor.

Branksome, assured that Elaine was not dead, but living, had bent over the wreck of Venetia Arundel's rich beauty, but Frank, with a groan of horror at what he saw, pushed his brother aside. "This is my place," he said. "Let me come to her."

Lord Branksome rose to his feet, and with a gesture, kept out those who would have pressed into the room, and held out his arms to the pale and silent Elaine.

"My darling," he said, "you must let me take you away. This is no sight for your eyes. Why this poor woman is here at such an hour in this costume, with the secret panel open, I don't know, but I begin to guess, and whatever was her motive, I fear it was no good one."

"No!" came a gurgling voice from the bleeding lips of Venetia Arundel. "Don't—leave me. It was for you—I did it. I loved you. Ah, you are cruel! You think only of her."

As she shook an impotent hand at Elaine, Frank covered his face, with a sob which mourned the loss of his sweet ideal, and snatching his "Lily Maid" in his arms, Lord Branksome carried her out of the room.

* * * * *

Venetia Arundel did not die. For ten days she remained at Grey Towers, shut away from the sight of all save the surgeon who had sewed up the mangled wounds made by Lion's revengeful teeth, and who attended her every day.

All the guests were gone, their curiosity as to the mystery of the night after the ball, more or less satisfied by the statement that Lady Elaine D'Arcy's dog had attacked Mrs. Arundel in his mistress' room and seriously injured her.

Even Frank had departed for a trip abroad of indefinite length, and the household consisted only of Lord Branksome, his mother, and Elaine, who had stayed that poor, nervous Lady Branksome might not miss her presence at such a time of gloom.

The "Lily Maid" would have gone to Venetia's bedside to speak kind and soothing words, if the sick woman would have received her. But when the trained nurse who had been brought down from London gently said that Lady Elaine D'Arcy wished to see Mrs. Arundel, the scarred face was fretfully turned away. Only half-an-hour before, the nurse (who knew none of the real circumstances), had repeated to her charge an item of gossip she had heard downstairs. Lord Branksome and his *fiancée*, Lady Elaine, were to be married much sooner than they had expected, almost at once, in fact. And so the invalid moaned irritably when she heard that her successful rival waited at the door.

"Send her away!" she ejaculated. "I won't have her come here to stare at my poor face, that will never be what it was so long as I may live. I hate her! Tell her to go and not to come back again."

Naturally the nurse gave the message in a softened form; but Elaine had heard, and hurried away, shivering.

Next day a heavily-veiled woman moved slowly out of the house, leaning on the arm of her nurse, and stepped into the carriage that waited for her.

As she reached the door, Lord Branksome, implored by soft-hearted Elaine, approached her for a grave word of forgiveness at parting. But with a cry and a repellent gesture she went by him, thus passing for ever out of his life and his "Lily Maid's."

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"	VIII.	...	...	London Life.
"	XI.	...	...	The King and his Games.
"	XV.	...	...	What the King wears.
"	XVIII.	...	...	Is the King a Good Fellow?

"I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby," and find out what the "G. D." means next week.

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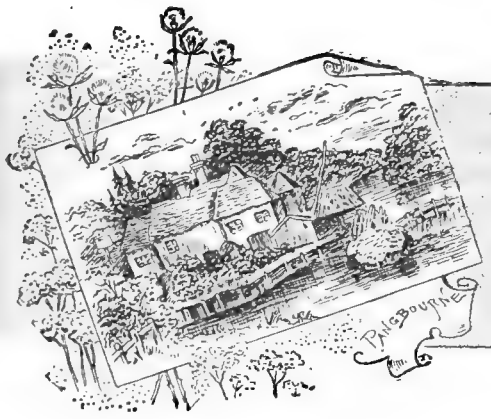

The Old Love.

JACK BARRY walked out of the hotel the picture of physical health and strength.

He was handsome too, and had he but been rich, the girl who could have refused his proffered hand would have been a curiosity. But alas, like most of his comrades, he was poor. Not that he cared a continental, as he would have said to himself, but he ascribed the one back-handed slap that he had ever received from Dame Fortune to his poverty.

Of course it was a girl that did it. Young officers take nothing seriously except girls—and unfortunately very few girls take young officers seriously. It was one thing to flirt and dance with a handsome fellow in uniform, with a stripe on his trousers and painfully new-looking shoulder-straps on his shoulders, and quite another to marry him.

Jack had fallen in love with a girl almost before the ink on his commission was dry, he had danced attendance on her a whole summer at the seaside, and just before he left to join his regiment, he had proposed, and had been quietly, but firmly, rejected.

The rejection was a stunner. He was convinced that the girl was in love with him. He rather thought that he was treating her with unusual fairness by being actually in love with her. She tumbled him off a very lofty perch with a little half-whispered "No."

He hardly believed his own ears when she said it. Then he suddenly discovered how much he really did love her. He could not live without her—no, not a day. He meditated suicide all one night, resolved to commit it, unfortunately went to sleep in his chair, woke up with an enormous appetite, ate a good breakfast, and—changed his mind. He concluded that it would be much more romantic, and would make her feel worse, to waste his life, and then, some day, to tell her it was all her fault.

Ah! She would understand it all then.

After joining his regiment, however, Jack did not get an opportunity to waste his life. His colonel was an ideal cavalryman, there was plenty of work to do, and he sent two years practically abroad.

It was a good thing for him. It kept his mind at work; he had no opportunity to spend his pay, and, therefore, was obliged to save it; so, at the end of that time, when he managed to get a three months' leave of absence, he had a little money and a good deal of common sense.

He had developed. Instead of wasting his life, he found that he was full of healthy ambition, and while he could not forget that girl, he had grimly resolved to get along without her.

He did propose to do one thing, however, and that was to get to London as fast as railways would carry him, call on her, and let her know how well he was getting along without her.

He reached his hotel at noon—he was just leaving his hotel to call on her at eight.

She lived in Mayfair. It was a delightful winter night, and with a full moon, and he walked down to the house repeating on the way a dozen times or more the question, "Is Miss Burroughs at home?" so that his voice would not tremble the slightest particle even before the servant. His voice did not tremble either when the critical moment arrived, but he was a little astonished that the servant should usher him into the drawing-room without saying a single word, or even asking his name. He was still more astonished to find that there was no light in the room save the stream of moonlight that slanted in at the windows and the faint reflection from the street. Astonishment was not the word for the occasion when he saw Violet Burroughs herself leaning on the sill of the window in the moonlight, and he almost gasped when she said in the most matter-of-fact way:

"I knew you would come back."

"Did you?" he exclaimed, sinking uninvited into a chair.

"Yes," she repeated.

Then he noticed that she was crying.

"I hope that I don't intrude. Perhaps I had better call again?"

She paid no attention to the suggestion, but still looking out of the window, said:

"Your voice has changed already—a great deal."

"Yes, I suppose it has," he answered.

"You said you would be a changed man, but I did

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not suppose it would affect you so soon," she continued. "Oh, it is dreadful, isn't it?"

"My voice? I did not know that it was. I'll have it trained."

"How can you jest? You know I mean this affair of ours—your love for me."

"Oh!"

"When you jest you make me feel that you are desperate. You will not commit suicide, will you? Promise me that you won't?"

The conversation was becoming rather rapid. Jack had called for the purpose of saying not a word concerning the old love that he had so nearly buried; for the purpose, too, of letting her see how well he had buried it, and how nicely he was getting along without her, after all; and here she was, plunging into it herself in an almost unladylike manner, and dragging him along after her.

More than that, she was rapidly opening the old wounds; and still more, she was resurrecting the old love. Why was she crying? Why did she expect him? How did she even know he was in town? She must have expected him to call that very evening; else she would not be acting in this—to say the least—highly informal manner. But the thing that pleased him most was the fact that the whole thing was so fresh in her mind. It was possible that even now she might be won by him. He answered her last question:

"I did think of suicide—but I gave the idea up. There is too much in life to live for; there are too many changes of luck, too many opportunities to win in the end what was refused them at the beginning——"

"Oh, no—no! Do not think that you can ever win my love!"

"But, Miss Burroughs, I did not come here to win your love. You may remember that when we parted you assured me that you had a great respect for me, and that you hoped you would see me often—in fact—er—I believe you said—er—that you would be a sister to me, or something like that—and I have no intention of compelling you to receive my unwelcome attentions."

"But you love me?"

"Well, I—er—I——"

"You must love me."

"It shall be just as you say."

"I do not mean that either. You would not have acted as you did unless you loved me."

"Well, I'll acknowledge" (he was getting just a little tender now) "I do love you. I've tried to forget you, but couldn't."

"You haven't had a very long time to try to forget."

"It has seemed very long indeed to me."

"Yes, it has to me, too. I have been sitting here at this window crying ever since."

This was a stunner. Sitting there crying ever since? Was it possible, or was the girl crazy? He never solved the question. The girl continued:

"But I do not love you, and, no matter what papa and mamma say, I will never marry you. I have never told you the reason why. I'll tell you now; I love another."

"Another?"

"Yes, and have for a long time; and I never expect to see him again, for I sent him away, and he may be dead now, poor fellow. I thought it would be fun to reject him, and I really didn't know how much I cared for him—and then I thought he wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. But oh! he did, and I have been the most miserable girl in the world ever since. I love him—I love him—I love him, and he ought to have sense enough to know it."

She broke into sobs, burying her head—a quivering mass of disordered hair—in her hands.

"Then it has always been quite a hopeless case, so far as I am concerned?"

"Yes."

"Well, let me show you how bravely I can stand it. Let me be a brother to you. Tell me who it is. I'll go to him and bring him back to you. I have an idea that he will be very glad to come, whoever he is."

"No" (with a shake of her head), "he is too proud. He will never come back to me."

"Tell me who he is."

"You know him."

"Well?"

"He is Mr. John Barry, and is in the Army. You remember him at the seaside two years ago."

Jack pinched himself to discover whether he was awake or dreaming. He felt like shouting, but concluded that it wouldn't be quite the correct thing. He wanted to laugh with happiness, but he couldn't laugh while she was crying there in the corner. He saw it all now. She thought she was talking to some other fellow whom she had refused just before. Finally he said, though:

"Yes, I know him very well; but he, too, has changed."

"In what way?" she asked anxiously.

"Well, his voice has changed, too."

"That's nothing. I don't care how he has changed, if he only loves me as he used to."

"He does; and, by the way, his voice is very much like mine now."

It was not the words he had used, but the tone of voice in which he had spoken them that gave her woman's intuition the spur. She looked quickly up. He was standing now where she could catch the outlines of his figure. She uttered a little exclamation, and—well, this is the end of the story.

T. W. H.

WHAT IS THE "G. D."?

It doesn't stand for a "good deal," and yet there is a good deal in what it does stand for.

It doesn't stand for "Giant Despair," though some editors we know will be giants of despair when they see what it does mean.

It doesn't stand for "Good Day," though it will be a good day for you when you know what it does stand for.

Then what is the "G. D."?

See Next Week's SHORT STORIES.

"In the Gloaming, O My Darling," tell me what the "G. D. is."

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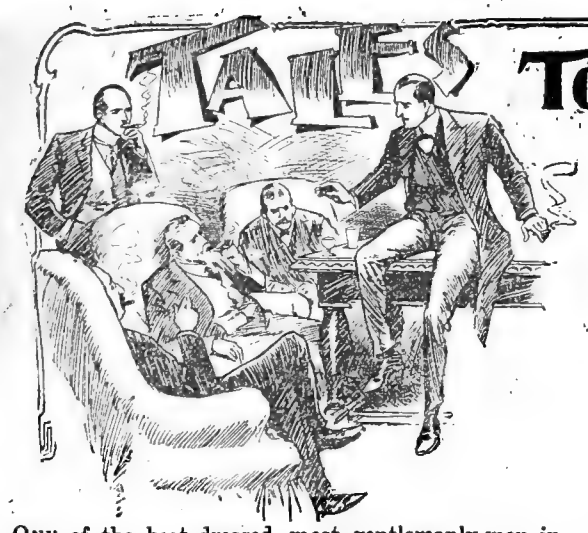

TOLD OFF DUTY.

THE PASSINGHAM PAPERS.

Told by THE COMMISSIONAIRE.

ONE of the best-dressed, most gentlemanly men in the "Stand-Easy" is Harvey Rees. To see him on Saturday nights in frock-coat (the left sleeve pinned, empty, to his breast), well-fitting trousers, and "patents," you would never associate him with the "Corps of Commissionaires."

And yet is he an especially smart member of that useful public body, and may be seen any day standing, courteous and attentive, in the outer lobby of the greatest of West-end universal stores.

He is a man approaching his half-century, and respected alike by his employers (with whom he has been for a number of years now) and by all, without exception, of his fellow "Stand-Easy's."

When requisitioned, as he was one Saturday night lately, for a yarn, he at once, with military precision, assented, and began.

"It's some time ago now" said he, "that the thing happened, that, in a pecuniary sense at least, may be said to have made me.

"Most of you know the scene of my daily duties—Harpers' Stores—although you would never imagine that there could be a romantic side to the life of a Commissionaire, in that position.

"Such an idea would be a big mistake, as the story I am going to relate will conclusively prove.

"It was a blazing hot afternoon in August, two years ago; and 'Harpers' was doing a roaring trade.

"I always have my work cut out at such times; what with calling and attending cabs; keeping an eye on suspicious characters; and helping helpless ladies; but this day in particular I was fairly run off my feet.

"I can't quite recollect, but I think it was a late-season sale; and you all know how, in such circumstances, the ladies (bless 'em) will run half over London bargain-hunting. If they only knew, they wouldn't do it, for in nine cases out of ten (I speak by the card) the bargain isn't a bargain after all.

"Well, about half-past three, a single-horse brougham drove up to my entrance, and a lady of, I should say, sixty years, white-haired, and in half-mourning, descended from it.

"I thought she looked curiously at me as she passed, making, as she did, a half-hesitating pause, as if almost inclined to speak.

"She even turned her head when within the glass doors, stared intently at me for a minute, and then went about her business. For the moment I was puzzled, for I seemed to know her face.

"'She's wonderfully like what Mrs. Passingham, Captain Passingham's wife, would be now,' said I to myself. 'And yet it can't be her. This one's too old besides—there! I'm an idiot! it can't be her!'

"But it was. The bustle was paralyzing; (it always is at its height between four and five, afternoons; specially at sale times); and I was standing arguing a point with an exasperating old lady, who didn't know her own mind; and expected me to supply the deficiency.

"'Is not your name Rees, Harvey Rees?'

"I righted-about-face like a shot, and there was my puzzle again, with a smile on the sweetest of old faces it has ever been my lot to look upon.

"'Yes, madam,' I respectfully answered her, and giving her a salute, 'and I think, asking your pardon for taking the liberty, that you are——?'

"'Mrs. Passingham, Rees; don't you remember—my husband, Captain Hugh, and the little bungalow at Simla?'

"'Yes, madam, well; and I'm pleased, indeed, to see you again, that I am!'

"'Why, you look just the same, Rees—not a bit altered—not a day older. But I forget, your arm! where did you lose your arm?'

"'In Burmah, ma'am, after I left the Captain for active service. But I hope he's all right—the Captain I mean?'

"'No, Rees, that's my trouble; he died this time last year, on the very day that he was gazetted Colonel of the old regiment.'

"'Forgive me, ma'am!' I said hurriedly, 'I am sorry—for you, and for myself, too, for he was the best master officer's servant ever had!'

"'I'm glad, Rees, to hear you say that of him. But I must run away now, or 'Harpers'' will be finding fault with me for taking up your time.'

"Just as I turned the carriage-door handle, she leant forward, and said:

"'Oh, Rees! something has just struck me. Are your evenings free?'

"I said that they were.

"Ever of Thee I'm Fondly Dreaming," and thinking about the "G. D."

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"'Well, here is my card; come and see me to-morrow evening after dinner, about nine. There is a matter I should like to talk over with you. Will you come?'

"I said that of course I would.

"When she had gone I was more in a fog than ever as to what it all meant.

"What on earth could she want with me?

"When I told the wife about it she soon settled things—to her own satisfaction.

"'Don't bother your head!' she summed up. 'What ever it is you'll know to-morrow evening, and all the worrying in the world won't hasten your knowing by so much as one minute.'

"True enough! But all the same I couldn't help worrying, and, as a matter of fact, did worry during the interval, till I got quite feverish and out of sorts.

"It'll help you to understand better what followed if I go back a little.

"When I enlisted in the —th Regiment, ordered for India, Captain Passingham was in command of the company to which I was intimately attached.

"From the first I liked him, and was fortunate enough myself to gain his goodwill and approval.

"This resulted, in no long time, in my getting appointed his servant, much to my satisfaction.

"He had married just before I joined, his wife and he being a perfect pair—no nonsense about them. They had thought for others, which, as a rule, officers and their wives (specially the wives) haven't—in India, at any rate.

"Of course, I was the envy of the whole regiment; it was only natural. There wasn't a man that wouldn't have grovelled in the dust for the privilege of cleaning young Mrs. Passingham's boots, the Captain, too, being, with all alike, as popular as it was possible for an officer to be.

"By-and-bye a little family came along—two boys and a girl, but the girl died when a baby.

"I got on first-rate with them all, and taught the young gentlemen, I believe (at least up to the time when they left India for England to be educated) everything in the shape of sport and athletics.

"They could, both of them, ride, box, swim, play cricket, and do a dozen other things before they were, each of them, six years old, and that they got it all in the first instance from me, I'm more proud of to-day than of anything else in the whole wide world.

"It was only a week or two before the young Passinghams sailed for home that an incident occurred which might have had disastrous issues.

"There was a small detachment of sepoys (part of a native regiment) in cantonment, one of whom, Lal-Singh, bore a somewhat indifferent character.

"Sullen, vindictive, cunning, he was at once a terror to his more orderly comrades, and a perpetual source of anxiety and worry to the military authorities.

"It remained, however, for me to be the indirect means of his final exit from the service.

"On a certain morning I had arranged with Master Hugh, the eldest boy, to give him a last swimming lesson.

"The place selected was our usual practice water while in the hills, viz., an old and ruinous tank in a side-hollow of the road leading down to the valley.

"Master Hugh was disporting himself to his heart's content, myself superintending operations; Cecil, meanwhile, playing merrily about the edge of the cistern, and occasionally, with a laugh and a shout throwing light missiles at his brother.

"Suddenly I was startled by a loud 'whiz' over my head, followed by a tremendous splash in the water, close to the boy's head.

"'Rees! Rees!' cried out Master Hugh. 'Lal-Singh threw a big brick at me, and he's running away!'

"I turned like a tiger, and was after him before he could reach the belt of cypress that fringed three sides of the little copse.

"He could run, and—so could I. Finding, though, that he had too great a start of me, I tried his own tactics, and hurled at him, with all my strength, the heavy stick I carried; with such unerring aim, that it struck him full and fair on the back of the head.

"He fell like a log.

"Calling out to the boys to come on at once, I secured my prisoner by binding his ankles with my waistbelt; and his arms behind him with his own; and left him lying there on his face, for the guard to fetch him.

"It seems that Captain Passingham had had reason to complain of Lal-Singh to the Commander of the native troops.

"Severely punished, the sepoy vowed revenge; and finding his opportunity in the lad Hugh's defenceless position in the water, he took cowardly and murderous advantage of it.

"He was not only cashiered, but was tried by the Civil power for the outrage and sentenced to a long term in the Andamans.

"I stayed with the Captain for some time after this, till, in fact, I volunteered for Burmah, from which time, to the day I saw Mrs. Passingham at Harpers', I lost sight of the family altogether.

"I may say that the Captain was particularly well-off, inheriting, as he did at an early age, a fortune, so I heard, of something like eight thousand a year from his father, besides a lovely place in Norfolk, not far from Sandringham.

"So much for reminiscence.

"According to agreement I was at Mrs. Passingham's, Lennox Gardens, S.W., next evening, and was at once shown up to her.

"She was alone, and there it was that I saw how marvellously like she yet was to the Mrs. Passingham of old days. Spite the white hair, the signs of age, there was still the same kindly, winning smile, the same gracious gentleness of manner.

"The story she had to tell me was sad in the extreme.

"Briefly, it was this:

"It was the Captain's one great desire that both his sons should follow a military career. The younger, Cecil, fell in at once with the idea; but Hugh, the first-born, the heir, while not definitely dissenting, showed a manifest reluctance to comply with his father's wishes.

"Then came trouble of quite another kind.

"The elder son, having completed his education at Eton and kept one term at Oxford, returned to India on a visit to his parents; leaving his brother to pursue his military studies at Sandhurst.

"Strange to say, from the moment he set foot in Calcutta up to my interview with his mother in Lennox Gardens, nothing more was seen of him. He vanished utterly and completely.

"It was heard, however, that, on arrival at the seat of Government, he had called upon his father's agents, drawn the amount (not inconsiderable) placed with them

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to his son's credit by Captain Passingham, and—disappeared.

"Within a week his mother received a letter from him by 'dak' messenger. It contained no address, and was not even dated.

"Its purport was that while in England he had become sincerely attached to a certain young lady—a prominent member of a well-known theatrical company. That company having made Calcutta a temporary stopping-place in a tour round the world, he had taken the opportunity of his sweetheart's presence there, and married her. Whither they were bound he did not explain. (Subsequent inquiries revealed that the actress in question had seceded from the troupe immediately after the marriage.) He knew, he said, that his father would never forgive him for what he had done, and for his refusal to adopt a military life. His musical abilities would, he imagined (he was a fine musician, a genius some said who ought to know) find bread for him and her.

As for his inheritance, let Cecil have it, if its assumption was to be coupled with, for him, Hugh, impossible conditions, he would none of it. Even that part of it which was entailed he renounced absolutely.

He was grieved, he added, if in all this he vexed his mother, and made her to sorrow for him, and on his account, but seeing that the irrevocable step had been taken, and, that, had it been even otherwise, family discord would inevitably have resulted, it was best that things should be as they were. He should always love her, his beautiful, darling mother, but she would doubtless have good consolation in Cecil's loyalty and affection.

"That was the last from or of him.

"Captain, or rather Colonel Passingham's death put a different and more complicated complexion on matters, and this, in connection with a recent unexpected communication from the family solicitor, Mr. Powell, made the still mourning mother to emerge from her despair, and to rouse herself to action.

"Mr. Powell's news, brief and to the point, was to the following effect:

"At the Home for Asiatics in the West India Dock Road, a certain Hindoo, calling himself Lal-Singh had, during the previous week, succumbed to the fatal influence of the English climate.

"Taken to the hospital, where he actually died, there was found, on searching his clothing, a letter, bearing the signature of Hugh Passingham, and dated but a couple of months back from a house in Montgomery Street, San Francisco.

"It was a curt reply to an application of the addressor for aid in distress. How Lal-Singh had discovered the writer's whereabouts is unknown, and that his idea was simple mendicity is doubtful. Anyway, without suspecting the applicant's identity with his sometime assailant and would-be murderer, Hugh Passingham inclosed a dollar and—thought no more of it.

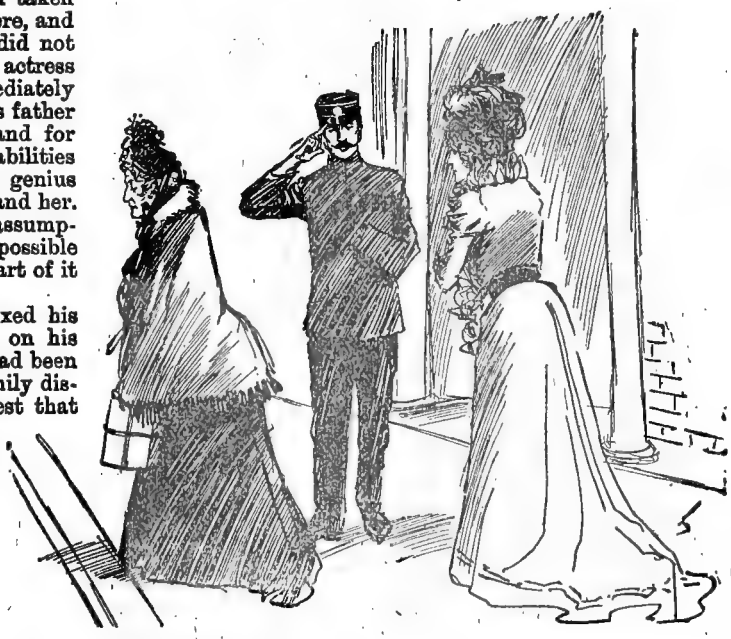
"'Now,' said Mrs. Passingham, 'I have my reasons, best known to myself, for not being too confidential with Mr. Powell in this matter and for not telling him exactly all that I mean to do in the circumstances. I always trusted you, Rees, in the days when you served my husband, and for that matter, me, so faithfully. I am about to renew that trust in a way that will enable you to be of great service to me, and, all being well, to benefit yourself.'

"'I shall be only too happy, ma'am,' I said, 'to help you in any way I can, both for your own and the Captain's sake.'

"'Well, then, Rees, I am about, without saying a word to anybody beyond yourself, to sail to California, and to bring back my boy—if I can.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'I see, but——'

"'Wait a moment,' she interrupted me. 'There are some papers—important papers—in my possession,



"Is not your name Rees, Harvey Rees?"

which it is not expedient should be seen by anyone except my son Hugh. These I do not think it wise to take with me, in case of anything befalling me by the way. So I have decided to intrust them to you, to be kept by you until I or Mr. Hugh demand them of you.

"'I may say at once that they are not strictly legal documents, but private papers and memoranda left by my husband in my hands for transmission to our son if he could ever be found.'

"I left Lennox Gardens that night with the packet in my possession, and I can safely say that from the moment when I placed it in my inner breast pocket to the day when I gave it up to its rightful owner I never knew the blessedness of peace of mind.

"I got a line from Mrs. Passingham from Liverpool on the eve of her sailing, and another from New York just as she was about to start on her long railway trip across the great continent.

"I heard nothing more for nearly three months; then, one afternoon, about five, a man servant brought me a note. It was from Mrs. Passingham herself, and dated from Lennox Gardens.

"'Will Harvey Rees call here to-night at nine o'clock and *bring the packet with him.*'

You will see it in "Short Stories" next week.

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"Poor lady! She left England hopeful, full of anticipation, and she returned—desolate.

"And yet not quite so.

"On reaching San Francisco, she had no difficulty in tracing her son.

"But it was to find him on his death-bed. Late hours, as pianist at a fourth-rate variety theatre had told upon a never very strong constitution.

She took it from me, walked over to the fire, and seemed about to drop it into the glowing coals.

"He knew her, and she says that that last hour in the company of her boy, was at once the sweetest and the most sorrowful of her life.

"She buried him, having with her own hands closed his eyes.

"'Rees,' she said, after she had finished telling me everything; 'give me the packet.'

"She took it from me; walked over to the fire, and seemed about to drop it into the glowing coals.

"A rushing blaze and flare; a few powdery cinders; and the secret that I had guarded for the past three months so carefully, would have remained a secret for ever.

"What it was that influenced Mrs. Passingham to delay the deed I most certainly do not know; neither does she, I think, quite know herself.

"Mere curiosity it was not, for she was not the sort of woman who would be inclined to give way to that feminine failing. It must have been an instructive belief in her own mind that this paper, or set of papers would right a wrong; or would at least bring out into free light and air, that which had languished for so long in the shadow and suffocation of misunderstanding and neglect.

"If I am right in my last alternative, then was the result a wonderful, if tardy, rendering of justice to (while he lived) a very unhappy man, and a bringing of great peace to the mother that bore him, and who mourned him, as only such mothers can and do mourn the sons of their love.

"'Rees!' said Mrs. Passingham, when she had seated herself again, the packet still unopened in her lap, 'Rees! I don't know why I confide in you as I do. I suppose it is because I believe you to be faithful and true, and also because I have, though possessing many acquaintances, no real friends.'

"'Madam,' I said, 'I am only too proud of the honour of your confidence and esteem; though I assure you that you greatly overestimate any good qualities I may possess.'

"'I am content to abide by my own judgment,' she answered, sadly smiling the while, 'and so, Harvey Rees, you, who knew and loved both my dear husband and my dear son, shall share with me, here and now, whatever secret this packet contains.'

"It was with the greatest calmness, and with the steadiest of fingers, that the beautiful old lady broke the seal.

"From out of the cover there fluttered on to the ground quite a dozen and a half closely written sheets of manuscript.

"I stooped and picked them up, and handed them back to her. She just put them in their proper order, and within half-an-hour I had become the depositary of a family secret, at once eminently sad and touching.

"As I am, for obvious reasons, using fictitious names throughout this narration (although Mrs. Passingham is now herself dead, having survived her husband scarcely two years), it will manifestly hurt nobody if I give a brief account of that which I heard from the lips of my old mistress, as she read out the paper to me that night.

"The document (for it was in reality but one) set out

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by asking pardon of his absent son, should he ever see this confession, for any harshness he, his father, may have shown towards him in connection with his matrimonial folly.

"There was much self-abasement, and pathetic contrition, which certainly would not interest you, as it would not be seemly or generous were I to repeat it.

"The main point of all was this: That the captain (his promotion counts as nothing with me), after an especially extensive sowing of wild oats, fell in love with the leading actress at London's most fashionable theatre. Long and ardently he wooed her, to be in the end successful.

"But he made the mistake so many men of position make when taking a wife from the stage. He failed altogether to appreciate, or comprehend her; while she, living in an entirely different, because an artificial world, was first impatient, and then utterly discontented.

"What the result would have been had she lived is not difficult of understanding. The practical and immediate results were for a time, at any rate, disastrous, (with regard to Captain Hugh), involving, as they did, the alienation of his family.

"That there had been no really overmastering love is evident in that when, six years after, he met the Mrs. Passingham I knew and revered, he acknowledged to having found his ruby of rubies.

"The lengthy manuscript concluded with an ardent prayer that he might be permitted to see his son's face again, and if that might not be, then that son would forgive his father for having blindly forgotten how that he, too, had been through the fire.

"I looked for Mrs. Passingham to be sorely distressed by this revelation of her dead husband's secretiveness and unnecessary hard dealing with their son.

"But she was not as most women are. Hurt she may —she must have been; but she did not let me perceive it; her first words upon laying down the last sheet being:

"'Thank Heaven, that his heart was at least toward his son, and the boy—he knows—he knows—now!'

"Yet again, a few days afterwards, I called upon her at her request. I saw, as I entered the drawing-room, a tall, slight, dark young lady, sitting quietly in the shadow of a great screen.

"There was just the ghost of her old smile in Mrs. Passingham's eyes, as she said to me:

"'Rees, this young lady, who is she like?'

"The girl now came forward and stood by the elder lady's side.

"'Like ma'am!' I said. 'Why, like Mr. Hugh, if I may say so. Yes, it's young master over again in—in——'

"'You're right, Rees! you're right!' cried the old lady, immensely pleased. 'Anita is certainly her father over again; and now that she is to live with me, I am glad, very glad, Rees, that things are as they are.'

"I could see what she meant; for it was with a great, deep, sigh that she said this; while it was quite clear to me that relief, intense relief was at the bottom of it—and, for her sake I too was glad.

"I have only to add, that the day Mr. Cecil came into what was now absolutely his own, I received a deed conferring upon me an annuity, far in excess of my deserts; and which, with my pension, and my wages at Harpers', makes me to-day independent of the world, for as long as I shall live."

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Dr. SELSAM'S EXPERIMENT.

It was late in the afternoon of September that I called to see my old friend and comrade, Dr. Selsam, Professor of Pathology, etc. I found him alone in his magnificent library on the Bergstrasse, his elbows on a small marble table in front of him, and his eyes fixed on a crystal globe, whih seemed to contain nothing but clear water.

He seemed so deeply absorbed that I was on the point of withdrawing without disturbing his contemplations, when a big footman, whom I had passed snoring in the ante-chamber, suddenly woke up, and in stentorian tones announced "Mr. Theodore Kilrain."

Selsam drew a long breath, and slowly turned towards me, like an automatum, saying:

"Ah, is that you, Theodore?"

"Yes," I replied; "but what are you doing? Are you studying the elixir of life?"

I was quite taken aback by the scowl my words brought to his face.

"Theodore," he said, after a moment's pause, "this is no time for jesting. I am studying the malady of your respected aunt, Dame Hannah Wandulich. What you told me of her yesterday is very serious, particularly her exaggerated expressions in speaking of music, her ecstacies, her exultations—all are symptoms of a dangerous disease."

"And were you trying to find the solution to her malady in that bowl of water?"

"Even so, and it is a most fortunate chance that brought you here. I was just wishing for you." Pointing to a violin on the wall, he continued: "Will you be kind enough to play me one of Mozart's sonatas?"

The request was so unexpected, so singular, that I thought my friend's head had gone astray as well as my Aunt Hannah's. Divining my thoughts, he answered them, and with an ironical smile, said:

"Reassure yourself, Theodore, reassure yourself. My intellectual faculties are all right. I am on the road to making a grand—a sublime discovery."

At this I took down the violin, and began to examine it with an envious eye. It was one of those incomparable instruments which Frederick the Second had ordered to be manufactured for his special flute accompaniments.

I had scarcely touched the bow to the strings when I forgot my surroundings, forgot everything, in the beauty of the music and the pure tones of the violin. With my hat on the floor and my eyes closed, I was in the seventh heaven of delight.

How long this lasted I know not. When I awoke, as from a dream, I found myself lying on the Doctor's sofa wondering what had happened. In a weak voice I said:

"Well, Selsam, are you satisfied?"

Armed with a magnifying-glass, he was carefully examining his globe. The water had become turbid. Thousands of "infusoria" were crossing and re-crossing each other in every direction. Selsam's face was radiant with delight. Rushing towards me and grasping both hands, he enthusiastically explained:

"Thanks, thanks, my dear friend and comrade—a thousand thanks! You have just rendered an immense service to science."

I was amazed. How could my playing be a service to science? Selsam continued:

"My dear Theodore, I will not leave you in ignorance of the glorious part which you have played in the solution of this great problem. Come, follow me, and you shall see and understand all."

As the night had come on he lighted a silver lamp, and, opening a side door, motioned me to follow him. I was a prey to the most profound emotions as I walked through the long suite of rooms. I felt as if a revolution were going to be accomplished in my whole being. Perhaps I was about to receive the key to the invisible world.

The lamp threw a silvery light on the magnificent appointments of this sumptuous dwelling. Rich curtains, carpets, ornaments, and statuary were pictured in its softened radiance. Finally we reached the top of a broad staircase. We descended into an inner court, our footsteps waking mysterious echoes.

There were several doors in this court. Selsam stopped before one and said:

"This is my dissecting-room. Don't be alarmed. Nature never yields her most precious secrets but through the hands of Death."

I went to turn back, but Selsam had already entered, and I was compelled to follow. To my horror I saw a corpse—the corpse of a young man—lying on a long, oaken table. The head was thrown back. The eyes were wide open. On the breast was a deep incision. But what impressed me most was not the wound, nor the sombre look of the dead body; it was the immobility—the utter death-like silence.

"Is this eternal annihilation?" I asked myself.

"No," answered Selsam, who seemed to see the thoughts coming and going in my brain. "No; it is the birth of a thousand lives. Myriads enslaved by one force are going to be set free by this change. That force—that will—was *here*."

He struck the head; it gave forth a hollow, wooden sound. Then he plunged his scalpel into the corpse. I started back in horror. He did not even notice the movement, but continued calmly talking.

"Do you see these little, white fibres running in every direction? These are the nerves, the messengers carrying orders from the 'central molecule' to the extremities. Here are the organs of respiration—the lungs. Here of circulation—the heart, the veins, the arteries. Here of digestion; and each one has its separate molecules. But in life our welfare and comfort depend in a great measure upon our treatment of these infinitesimal creatures. They govern our organism."

"Then," I exclaimed, "where is our liberty? If I am the slave of infinitesimal molecules, how can I be held responsible for my actions?"

To this Selsam answered: "One molecule of my body can rebel against my whole being—often does, but then it perishes, takes the consequence of its own act. In the same way you are free. You can rebel against the laws of nature, misapply the power you have over the beings of which you are composed, and thus cause your own dissolution."

I could find no answer to this argument, and stood looking at him in breathless stupefaction. At last I said:

"All this sounds very logical, and no doubt is a beautiful theory, but I fail to see what relation it has to

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your globe of water, my venerable aunt's illness, and the music you requested me to play?"

"Nothing is plainer," Selsam answered with a smile. "You certainly know that the vibrations of a sound will set in motion grains of sand placed on the top of a drum, and cause them to form into geometrical figures of wonderful regularity."

"Yes," I replied, "but——"

"But," he impatiently exclaimed, "hear me out. In the same way in which that sound affects the molecules of water, the 'infusoria' that you saw in my globe, just so music acts upon the liquids of the body, bringing into existence infinitesimal animated beings endowed with emotion. This is what physicians call 'equivocal evolution.'

"You must also know that wave sounds act upon the nervous system, and produce electricity. This in turn engenders thousands of millions of insects in our bodies, which attack our organs, and cause all the countless diseases which flesh is heir to, the nature of which has hitherto been unknown, but my discovery makes it all clear.

"It shows they are caused by these animalcules—namely, the 'myriapoda,' which have six feet, but no wings; the 'thysanoptera,' whose abdomen and sides are covered with myriads of incomplete legs; the 'parasites,' with round eyes and mouths like suction pumps; the 'coleoptera,' the 'tepidoptera,' the 'hymenoptera,' and millions of 'rodentia,' which invade the body, devour it with their teeth, and gnaw it with their claws until it is like an old, worm-eaten log, dried up and withered—all the blood gone to feed and enrich the 'ascarides.'"

Selsam's description actually made my hair stand on end.

"And do you believe," I exclaimed, "that music—that sound can cause all these disasters?"

"Without the shadow of a doubt," he replied. "You have only to look at the old, withered up musicians, or at your venerable aunt, to be convinced. There is but one remedy for that unfortunate dame, but one that can cure her."

"What is that, Selsam? I am her heir, it is true, but it would be a terrible weight on my conscience if I left anything untried which could save her life."

"Yes, I recognise the natural delicacy of your feelings. It is affection, and not interest, that prompts you. But it is getting late. I have just heard the midnight bell. Come to-morrow night at ten and I will have the remedy ready, the only one that can save your Aunt Hannah. I shall cure her, you may rest assured. I give you my professional word on it."

With that he opened a door leading from the court into the Bergstrasse. We shook hands, and I repaired to my room, a prey to the most painful reflections.

"Great Heavens," I thought, "it is a lucky man who can find the remedy that will cure without killing the 'central molecule.'"

That night at supper, which I took alone with my good aunt, I watched her with a heart full of tender compassion.

"Alas!" I mused, "what would you say, my poor Aunt Wandulich, if you knew the millions of ferocious little beasts which are now devouring you as you quietly sip your tea?"

"What makes you look at me in that peculiar way, Theodore?" she inquired anxiously.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" I answered.

"Yes, it is something. You think I am worse. Do I look ill?"

"It is true, aunt, you are a little pale. You have received some new music lately, have you not?"

"Yes, I received the score of a new opera yesterday."

"I knew it, my dear aunt. You have spent the whole day at your piano, interpreting, going into ecstacies."

She turned scarlet.

"What does this mean, sir? Is it your business? Haven't I the right to?"

"Certainly you have the right, my dear aunt, only it is suicidal. You are ruining your nervous system."

"Nervous fiddlesticks! You don't know what you are talking about! You are crazy!"

"For goodness' sake, aunt, calm yourself. Anger produces electricity, which acts on the body, engendering millions of insects."

"Insects!" she screamed, bounding to her feet. "Did you ever see any insects on me, sir? How dare you insult me! Insects! insects! Katrina! Louisa! Bring me my smelling-salts, quick! Leave the room, sir!"

"But, aunt——!" I stammered.

"Leave the room, sir! I will disinherit you! You have insulted me!"

She shrieked. She raged. Her false front slipped to one side. Her cap fell over her ear. It was a frightful scene. Getting up and going to her, I exclaimed:

"My dear aunt, do be calm. I am not speaking of the insects you think of, but of the 'myriapoda,' 'coleoptera,' 'hymenoptera,' 'thysanoptera,' the countless army of microscopic monsters which have invaded your body and are devouring you by piecemeal."

At this my venerable Aunt Wandulich fell back in a dead swoon, her arms limp, her face as pale as death, and the paint on her cheeks showing like two spots of blood.

I was out of the house in two seconds. I rushed to my friend, Dr. Selsam, as livid as a corpse, crying: "The crisis has come!"

There I stopped. I was in the midst of a large company assembled in the doctor's library. There was Daniel Bremen, the keeper of the Archæological Museum, with his powdered wig, round face, and frog-like eyes. He was holding a gigantic horn to his lips, and seemed to be showing the company how to use it.

There was Chapel-Master Hoffer, doubled up in a big chair, and with his long legs stuck under the table, busy examining some queer-looking instrument. Kaspar Hansbrick, the Curator of the Hospital, and Dr. Heilsman, the Dean of the Faculty, were also there in their dress coats and white cravats. One of them was armed with what seemed an immense bronze waiter, the other with a gigantic drum covered with goat-skin.

These persons, seated round the library table, made such a grotesque picture, with their puffed-out cheeks and round, protruding eyes that I stood transfixed to the threshold with outstretched hand and gaping mouth.

Dr. Selsam gravely motioned me to a seat, while the keeper of the Museum, Daniel Bremen, went on with his explanations.

"This, gentlemen," he said, "is the famous 'buscia-tibia' of the Swiss. It has terrific power, capable of drowning the roar of the loudest cataract. If Mr. Kilrain will use it, I have no doubt he will produce a great effect."

On saying this, he placed the horn in my hand, and, turning to Kaspar Hansbrick, said:

"O, Leave Me Not, Dear Heart," without explaining the "G. D."

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"Your drum is the most wonderful ever invented. It is the karabo of the Egyptians. The Abyssinians used it in all their martial music. You, Dean Heilsman, have only to strike on this waiter from time to time. It is the celebrated 'tom-tom,' whose lugubrious sound resembles the tolling of our great cathedral bell. In the silence of the night it will have a magnificent effect. Are you ready, gentlemen? Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," they all exclaimed.

"Then let us go."

"Wait a moment," said Dr. Selsam, "until I explain my remedy to my friend Theodore. My dear friend, the condition of your respected aunt requires heroic treatment. After long meditation and research a luminous idea has struck me. Your aunt is suffering from weakness of the nervous system caused by the excessive use of music. Now, my remedy is to combine the Hippocrates treatment of 'contraries are cured by contraries' wth the teachings of our immortal Hahnemann 'like cures like.' Nothing can be more unlike the sickly sentimental opera of the present day than the wild music of the Africans.

"Therefore, I have borrowed their musical instruments, and intend to treat your aunt with a Hottentot symphony, and thus the principle of 'contraries are cured by contraries' will be complied with. On the other hand, nothing is more like music than music itself. So you will see, the theory 'like cures like' will also be complied with. The idea seems to me sublime."

"Selsam," I cried, "you are a man of genius. Hippocrates advanced the thesis, Hahnemann the antithesis, but you have created the synthesis. It is a grand discovery."

"Yes," he modestly answered; "but allow me to finish. Consequently, I applied to Dr. Bremen, the keeper of the Museum, who not only lent me the tom-tom, the bisca-tibia, and karabo from his collection, but volunteered to play on the Hottentot fife, which will be a valuable addition to our improvised orchestra."

I made a low bow to the keeper of the Museum, and expressed my deep gratitude. He seemed much moved, and said:

"Sir, I am happy to be of service to you and your venerable aunt, Dame Wandulich, whose numerous virtues have been obscured by her unhappy exaggeration of music. May we bring her back to the simple taste of our forefathers."

"Yes, I pray we may succeed," I cried most fervently.

"Let us go, gentlemen—let us go," said Dr. Selsam.

We proceeded down the grand stairway into the Bergstrasse. It was now eleven o'clock. The night was dark; not a single star shone in the great canopy above us. The weather-vanes screeched in the wintry winds, the lights on the lamp-posts burned with fitful gleams, as we glided through the streets, keeping close to the walls like so many assassins, our instruments concealed under our cloaks.

When we arrived at my aunt's, I noiselessly turned the key in the lock. Then we cautiously entered the vestibule, and by the light of a wax taper Selsam had brought with him, we ascended the stairs, and took our places opposite my aunt's bedroom, our instruments ready, waiting for the Doctor's signal. Nothing stirred in the house; it was wrapped in profound silence. Selsam raised his hand.

"Commence."

My horn, the tom-tom, the karabo, the fife, all started at the same time. Great Heavens, no words can convey an idea of that savage music. I felt as if the roof would surely be carried off. We heard a wild shriek; but, far from stopping, a kind of rage seemed to possess us. The drum, the tom-tom, the fife, went on with renewed vigour—such a terrific noise.

I could no longer hear my horn, although it was capable of drowning the crashing of thunder. But the tom-tom was the wildest, maddest of all. Its lugubrious vibrations aroused a sense of terror, a feeling as if a cannibal banquet were being prepared, and you were to be served as the roast. My hair stood on end. Twenty times Selsam shouted to us to stop. We were deaf, carried away by a kind of diabolical frenzy.

At last, exhausted, out of breath, scarcely able to stand, we were forced to stop our infernal concert. Selsam, putting his finger to his lips, said "Hush! —listen!" But our ears were buzzing so we could scarcely have heard the shriek of a locomotive.

After waiting a few minutes, the Doctor grew uneasy, and softly entered my aunt's bedroom to learn the effect of his remedy. He stayed so long that I was on the point of following him, when he came out exceedingly pale, and giving us a strange, startled look, said:

"Gentlemen, let's go home."

"But what is the result of the experiment?" I cried, catching hold of his arm.

He turned round and slowly answered: "The result—your venerable aunt is dead."

"Dead?" I exclaimed, starting back.

"Yes, the electrical commotion was too strong, too violent. It destroyed her 'ascerides,' but unfortunately killed the central molecule. That does not, however, disprove my theory in the least. Your aunt is dead, but she died cured of her disease."

With that he walked out. We silently followed him, pale with fright, and separated without a word. The conclusion of the affair had terrified us.

On the next day the whole town knew that Dame Hannah Wandulich was dead—that she had died suddenly in the night. There was some talk among the neighbours of a terrible, frightful noise they had heard, but it was attributed to a violent thunderstorm. No one paid any attention to it, and we escaped without the slightest suspicion. Besides, Dr. Selsam was called in to decide the cause of death. He declared that Dame Hannah had been carried off by a stroke of apoplexy, superinduced by cerebal excitement.

Six months after this event he published a book on the cure of "Helminthiasis" by music. It had an immense success, a world-wide reputation. The Emperor decorated him with the "Cross of the Black Vulture." The Empress deigned to congratulate him in person. He was elected President of the National Society of Science. In short, he is now a very celebrated man.

As for me, I shall never cease to reproach myself for contributing to my poor aunt's death by blowing on that infernal horn; but I take Heaven to witness I never thought of hurting her. The idea of killing her central molecule by electricity never entered my brain.

In truth, I confess to my shame, that if anyone had told me that music—even a Hottentot symphony—could have killed a fly I should have laughed in their face.

But now, since the wonderful discovery of Dr. Selsam, I deplore my ignorance. It breaks my heart to think my dear Aunt Wandulich was his first victim.

M. E B.

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The Story of a Photograph.

ARTHUR STANTON, although only thirty, was regarded as a confirmed bachelor, much to the vexation of certain elderly ladies in his circle of society.

He had inherited a large fortune, was handsome and fond of gaiety; he was decidedly a good match, from the point of view of these ladies, and yet they had not the least doubt that he was hopeless so far as matrimony was concerned.

He was constantly invited to all kinds of social functions and readily accepted such invitations; he was in every respect a ladies' man, but no member of the opposite sex seemed able to make the least impression upon him.

He was proof against pleasant smiles and tender glances—in short, proof against the arrows of Cupid. He was a flirt of the finest water.

He kept a handsome house, and loved to invite a select company of us to spend an evening with him, or we would have a drive on a coach or otherwise amuse ourselves. It was always a jolly party, and I am afraid that we were voted "wild" by our relations and acquaintances.

Stanton was wont to sneer at love, he said there was no such thing as loving one woman, but that you must love them all. If you had heard him talk on this subject as I have, you would have entertained the same notion as the rest of his friends, namely, that it was a simple impossibility for him to fall in love as that expression is commonly understood.

One evening we were spending an hour or two as the guests of Stanton in his town house. By "we," I mean half-a-dozen young fellows between twenty-five and thirty. I don't remember exactly what Stanton and the other four were doing at the moment, but Archer was at the piano, rattling over a new piece, and I, lazily smoking a cigarette, was strolling about the room to see if our host had picked up any fresh knick-knack during the past fortnight. In one corner of the room, on a small table, I saw an album, this arrested my attention because I had not seen it before, and I opened it and began to examine portraits and views with careless indifference.

There was nothing to interest me to any great extent, Stanton had dabbled in amateur photography and this album contained some of his work—and it wasn't very good.

I was about to shut up the book when I noticed that two of the leaves remained somewhat apart, as though something had been thrust into the album temporarily or by accident.

Stanton's house was a hall of liberty, and we had no scruples about examining and asking questions concerning anything and everything which came under our notice, so I opened the album at that particular place in order to find out what prevented it from shutting properly.

It was a cabinet photograph of a girl about twenty, so far as I could judge; there was nothing surprising in that, for Stanton had quite a collection, but the astonishing part of it was that the girl there represented was not pretty—to put it roughly, she was decidedly plain—and our host did not, as a rule, preserve photographs of ladies who were scarcely passable. I picked up the picture in order to exhibit it and to ask where he got it, but as I turned it over I saw on the back the inscription: "To my betrothed." And under those words was the name Christine.

I was staggered, simply staggered. This girl called Arthur Stanton her betrothed!

Then it occurred to me that the portrait did not belong to him, so I determined to settle the matter by asking him. If that inscription had really been addressed to him, then we should have some fun, for we would tease him until we found out who she was and where she was living; we should, in addition, feel that he had been duping us and playing the part of a hypocrite.

"Gentlemen," I called out in a tone which drew all eyes towards me and made Archer cease playing, "it will interest you to gaze upon the features of Mr. Arthur Stanton's *fiancée*. Now, Arthur, who is she?—where is she? Out with it, man!"

There was a roar of laughter as he held up the photo, from all except Stanton; he rose slowly from his seat, his face extremely pale and grave, came towards me and took the picture from my hand.

"Gentlemen, don't make fun out of a tragedy. She was my affianced wife!" said Stanton, as, after a look at the picture, he placed it almost reverently in the album.

"It is well that you should know the story since you have found out part of it," he continued, seating himself again and speaking with a gravity which was quite foreign to him. "Perhaps you think me a hypocrite. I deny the charge, but I make no pretence of defending myself. I am satisfied that I live up to my opinions. Listen to the story; it will make a variation on our usual method of passing the time."

There was dead silence; we all felt that we were to hear the broad details of a tragic episode in this man's career, and the mere fact had a sobering effect.

I will give Stanton's narrative in his own words as nearly as I remember them, and I assure you that it made such an impression upon me that my narration must very closely resemble the original.

* * * * *

It is seven years ago. I was studying at Oxford; at least, that is what I was supposed to be doing, but I was

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more bent on pleasure than on the acquisition of knowledge. But we will pass that.

It was well in the autumn, but it was more like a summer. I was quietly reading in my private apartment, when I was disturbed by a knock at the door. Thinking that it was my landlady, I shouted to her to come in, but was startled by the entrance of a middle-aged woman, neatly but poorly dressed, with her bonnet on and a light cape over her shoulders.

I did not relish this visit on the part of a stranger,

It was a cabinet photograph of a girl about twenty.

but I politely, though frigidly, offered her a chair and asked her business. She hesitated for a few seconds, then, recovering her self-control by an evident effort, she began:

"I have come to ask a service, it may seem a great one, but to you it cannot be more than a small service—an easy one.

"I am a widow in very poor circumstances and I have an only child—a daughter—nearly twenty-one. She is my only joy in this world, and—and she is dying!"

Her voice faltered, but she quickly resumed:

"It is one of those wasting diseases. Outwardly there seems to be very little the matter with her, but she is weak, she is getting thinner and thinner, and she is sad—so sad! The doctor has really given her up, he tells me that it is useless to give her medicine, it can do her no good. The only thing that can be done for her is to cause a reaction by making her cheerful. But it is quite unlikely that this will make her better—I am convinced that it will not—but I should like to cheer her last days. That is why I come to you."

I thought I could then see the drift of the visit, the woman wanted pecuniary assistance, so I drew out my purse to give her something and so dismiss her.

"No, no!" said my visitor, shaking her head sadly. "I am asking for alms, but not of that kind. I am asking for the alms of a—lie! I will tell you.

"You are young and full of life, you are fond of pleasure, you are bright and happy. If you would come to my house now and then—I live quite close—and talk a little to my daughter, Christine. You are so bright that it would cheer her up and make her life end less miserably. I have come to ask you to act a lie, to pretend to take an interest in us—in her—and——No, it is not money, I do not plead for your influence to get her into a home, I ask for the alms of a lie!"

"I'm afraid—that is, I can help you with money or anything of that kind," I began to stammer, "but——"

The poor woman cut me short by actually falling on her knees and holding up her hands beseechingly. She seemed to have set her heart on carrying out this plan, and you know that I am always easily touched. I did not like to do it, yet I found it impossible to refuse, and in spite of myself I consented to act this lie.

I will not dwell upon the mother's gratitude, nor upon my own feeling of uneasiness when she was gone. I had pledged myself to carry out this plan, and, although I may not be quite what I ought to be, I always keep my word.

I paid my first visit on the following afternoon. I do not clearly remember the explanation for my appearance which was concocted by the mother and myself, but it was plausible enough and Christine did not doubt it. I found her much as you see her in the photograph, pale, languid and thin, with a sad expression in her eyes and a melancholy smile on her lips. She proved to be, like her mother, tolerably well educated and intelligent, so my task was rendered more easy; I had imagined that I should be compelled to utter a string of wearisome commonplaces and be bored to death even while striving to be gay, but I discovered that she had read a good deal and that she could follow with

"Way Down Upon the Swanee River," they're puzzling over the "G. D."

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interest a sensible conversation on a variety of topics. By the end of the second visit, which took place two days later, I had grown interested in this girl; it was really a pleasant change to spend an hour in that house and talk to her. On her part, she was delighted to see me, so much was evident even at this early stage. Her mother, noticing how my talk pleased Christine, thanked me as only a sorrowing mother can for what I was doing.

After that, I went more frequently until my visits became of daily occurrence. I had plenty of money, so I spent some of it in buying odd things for Christine; I would take her flowers, books and periodicals, and ornaments for the room, all of which I knew would serve to make her more cheerful and tend to arouse her from the languor into which she was apt to fall during the rest of the day. But I had to proceed with caution in order not to awaken in her mind the suspicion that I was far above her in social standing, for this might have destroyed the illusion which we were trying to create. No doubt she thought I was well-to-do, but not rich.

A month went by, and both Christine and I had learnt to look forward to the daily talk. The girl's face had assumed quite a new expression, a glorified expression; to a superficial observer it might have seemed that she was on the road to recovery, but her mother and I knew that it was not so, and if we had had any doubt on the subject it would have been dispelled by the doctor's verdict. I was acting my part as though the lie were truth; I threw myself thoroughly into it. I grew so interested in this fading flower that my part became unconsciously real to me. It delighted me to see the flush on her cheeks when I entered and when I paid her some little extra attention; I felt that I was doing good both to her and her mother, and I forgot all reserve and plunged headlong into pleasant waters, as it were.

So it happened that, seeing how the cold of approaching winter was sapping her strength and gradually taking her away from us, I redoubled my attentions and ended—as a supreme effort to bring about some good—by asking her to marry me.

Never shall I forget the look in her face, the look of infinite joy, and just as lasting in my memory will be the mother's expression of gratitude when I left the house that night.

Both believed that I was sincere, for I can well understand that the mother would not be able to believe I should go so far beyond the pre-arranged plan.

"And were you sincere?" inquired Archer, interrupting the narrative in order to ask the question which we were all revolving in our minds.

"I have never been able to answer that question satisfactorily," responded Stanton with a shake of his head. "I think not. The circumstances were exceptional, and you must answer the question for yourselves in the light of my opinions and my mode of living. Let me continue!"

From that moment I felt it my duty to do all that I could to save Christine. I had the very best physician in the country and I sent her to the south and installed the two women in a cottage where they could get more sunshine and more comfort. I lavished attention upon her; I spent money right and left in my endeavours to save her. But it was all in vain.

The specialist told me kindly but firmly that there was no hope, that my efforts might result in prolonging her life for a few weeks, but that was all. And even that hope was not realized.

The end came more suddenly than we had expected. Christine awoke to the fact that she was leaving us, and her grief was great—so great that I doubted the wisdom of what I had done during the preceding two months. I asked myself whether it would not have been better not to have interfered, and whether I had not brought upon myself and upon her mother a terrible punishment for our deception.

But after the first anguish, Christine bowed to the inevitable with cheerful resignation; she was happy, so she told me, in the possession of my love; I had made her closing days a delight instead of the misery they had threatened to be, and she was content.

She had a simple funeral and lies in the grave which I purchased in the little cemetery about half-a-mile from the cottage.

I have kept that photo as a souvenir of what I always call a tragic episode; I keep it locked up as a rule, but when I returned to town a fortnight ago I took it out to look at, and by some mischance I must have put it loosely into that album. That's all.

* * * * *

"That reminds me," I said suddenly, as Stanton ceased speaking. "You always go away by yourself for a week in the summer. What about Christine's mother?"

"You connect that week's holiday with her?" asked Stanton with a faint smile. "You are right. She still lives in that cottage, and it appears to me that my part is not yet played to the end, so I spend a whole week with her every year and talk to her about Christine and the days that are passed."

We were none of us inclined for our usual amusements that evening; the story had awakened other thoughts within us; so we soon took leave of our host and made our several ways homeward.

Was Stanton guilty of hypocrisy or was his action the result of excessive, but perverted, goodness of heart?

I have tried to answer that question, and I lean towards the latter explanation.

£10,000 as a Prize

might be offered, and still you wouldn't be more gratified than you will be when you know what the

"G. D."

is.

Don't get impatient, but wait and you will see particulars in next week's

SHORT STORIES.

"In Days of Old When Knights were Bold," the "G. D." was never dreamt of.

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By HEADON HILL.

Author of "The Peril of the Prince," "Seaward for the Foe," "Guilty Gold," etc.

SUMMARY.

THE steamship *Trojan* is homeward bound from the Cape. On board is Michael Standridge, who is returning to England from the Kimberley diamond fields, in possession of the "Kimberley Elephant," the largest diamond found in the colony. On the ship is his half-brother, Simon Hoathley. On the way up the English Channel the latter steals into the miner's cabin with the intention of murdering him and obtaining possession of the diamond. The miner, however, is on the alert, and presents a pistol at the intruder's head.

Michael sells his diamond for £20,000 to Messrs. Strauss and Lightfoot, whose clerk, Swinley Tasker, he discovers in an attempt to rob him of £35. Michael reads Tasker a lecture, kicks him, and departs—having made an enemy of this rascal. Reading is where Michael expects to find news of his daughter, and he purchases Kennett's Cross, a dilapidated farmhouse in the neighbourhood, this house meeting his requirements by being very secluded, and on a clay soil suitable for brickmaking.

He spends his time in making bricks, and as each batch is made he draws out from the bank a thousand pounds in gold, until at length his balance is quite low. One day Michael is thrown out of his pony-trap, and enters a house for assistance. Here he finds Cuthbert Blakesley, the cashier at the bank, and two ladies, and recognises in the younger one, to whom Cuthbert is engaged to be married, a strong resemblance to his wife.

Mrs. Bonfield is able to prove that Marion is Michael's daughter, and he promises to acquaint her shortly with the secret of Kennett's Cross. A few weeks later Marion and Cuthbert are sitting in the garden, waiting for her father, when a constable enters and arrests Cuthbert on the charge of murdering Michael.

At the inquest which follows strong evidence against Cuthbert is given. The latter also makes a statement. The verdict is one of "Wilful murder against Cuthbert Blakesley."

In order to clear his name, Marion lives at Kennett's Cross, and consults Zambra, the famous detective. The latter makes some startling discoveries, and energetically follows up certain clues.

CHAPTER XII.

TAMPONI'S RESTAURANT.

TAMPONI'S Restaurant in the Strand is a rendezvous chiefly patronized by sporting men of a certain class, by fashionable pugilists, by actors who spend most of their time in "resting," and by a contingent of that wideawake division of society which lives no one quite knows how. Tamponi's is neither imposing in its appearance nor extensive in its accommodation, relying rather on the support of regular frequenters than attempting to attract the general public, and retaining this support partly by the excellence of the cooking, and partly by the intimate relations which subsist among the *clientèle*.

It is a very orderly and well-regulated house. Signor Tamponi insists that the doors shall be shut and the gas turned down to the second at closing time. The constable on the beat is never by any chance called upon to quell a disturbance at Tamponi's. Yet there must be reasons why the higher officials of the force—the gentlemen in tweeds and frock coats from Scotland Yard—take such an interest in the place. When one of the latter opens the swing doors just wide enough to cast a comprehensive glance round the little bar and the restaurant beyond, and quietly glides away—at such times and seasons silence generally falls upon the customers for quite an appreciable time.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and Carlo, the waiter, was standing in the narrow doorway watching the crowds that jostled along the teeming thoroughfare. This was the slack hour of the day, the lunchers having departed and the diners not having arrived, and as Signor Tamponi himself preferred to minister to the stand-up customers in the bar, Carlo had a little idle time on his hands.

Suddenly there detached himself from the hurrying throng on the pavement an individual whose attire proclaimed him to be of Carlo's own calling. The short, shabby overcoat disclosing the shiny tails of a claw-hammer below, the sombre nether garments, the none-too-clean shirt front topped by a wisp of black necktie, and the thin, down-at-heel shoes that seemed specially built for slipshod locomotion, could have belonged to no one but a waiter. The swarthy features and the greasy black hair further suggested that the newcomer was a compatriot of the worthy Carlo. What more natural, then, that he should stop and enter into a brief but earnest conversation with Signor Tamponi's factotum, and clinch his argument by deftly passing to the latter something that rustled.

Carlo, who had listened first distrustfully, then with eagerness, nodded and retreated into the bar, where his master was chatting with one or two smartly-dressed customers.

Beckoning the signor aside, it appeared the waiter had a boon to crave. A friend of his, one Luigi Carfarelli, had brought the sad news that his—Carlo's—wife was on the point of death. She had been ailing in the morning, but he had not anticipated a dangerous turn. What he wished to propose was that he should go to his home in Soho to watch his dying wife, and that, with the signor's permission, he should himself engage his friend Luigi to take his place for the evening. Luigi was a skilled waiter by profession, and had held important engagements in leading *cafés* both in Paris and London. It was by his misfortune, not by his fault, that he was for a few days out of a situation.

Signor Tamponi was a good-natured man, when his own interests were not threatened, and he at once acceded to his servant's request. The substitute was fetched in and installed in his new duties, while Carlo flitted away sadly, to become absorbed in the ever-flowing stream of the Strand. Presently a party of early diners came in, and passing through, seated themselves in the restaurant

Next week "Short Stories" will tell you all about the "G. D."

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behind. At first the proprietor kept a critical eye on the new hand, but he soon found that affairs in the back room might safely be left to take care of themselves. Luigi Carfarelli waited as to the manner born.

In the course of serving the party the waiter had occasion to go into the front bar to ask the signor for a bottle of wine of a special brand ordered by the diners, and while he was waiting for it an incident happened which tended to show that the menial nature of his employment had not altogether cooled the hot blood of Italy in Luigi's veins. A shoeless, capless urchin pushed open the outer door, and, boldly entering, began to pester the loungers to buy one of the half-dozen boxes of matches which he held in his grime-stained hands. In doing so the lad stumbled up against the waiter, who, with a string of full-flavoured Italian oaths, cuffed and kicked the offender out through the door into the street, not loosing him till he was well outside on the pavement.

The boy gave the waiter as good as he got in the way of choice Billingsgate, and something besides; for, just as Luigi was releasing him with a parting kick, he dropped one of his match boxes and scudded away without stopping to reclaim it. The waiter promptly picked the box up, and after placing it in his pocket returned to his duties, still muttering imprecations at the interruption, to the delight of the loungers in the bar. Perhaps it was the thought of his capture from the enemy that calmed him down, for he evidently set some store by it. Taking advantage of a lull in the requirements of his charges, he retired up the room and examined the matchbox. It contained a pink telegraph form, on which was a message hailing from Wakefield, Yorkshire. Rapidly running his eye over it this is what he read:

"Have been to Morton Delaval. Saw the Rev. Mr. Standridge playing tennis in garden with his children. Tall, fair, good-looking man, quite different from description given by you. Christian name Samuel, not Simon. He and family been here for years, and much respected. From inquiries in village he can be no connection of party you are interested in, who must be a hoax. Returning to-night.—Lewis."

The waiter had barely time to master the contents and crumple the telegram into his pocket, when several customers came trooping into the room in quest of dinner, and the same moment Tamponi's voice was heard calling sharply for him from the bar. Luigi obeyed the summons with alacrity, and found the signor conversing with a young man who was leaning on the counter consuming a sherry and bitters, apparently having just entered. The newcomer seemed to be on terms of considerable familiarity with the proprietor, addressing him as "Tammy," while he in turn was addressed by the signor, in his curious foreign accent, as "Tasker, old fella."

"Here, Luigi," said Tamponi, "you will have to bustle. This gentleman wants dinner for two in the small private room on the first floor. His friend will be here in half-an-hour, so take his order and see the cook has it ready. You will have to be smart to serve the private room and the restaurant as well. Carlo is away," he explained to the customer, "but this chap seems to be up to what-you-call a snuff, and he'll make you comfortable."

Mr. Tasker ran his finger down the menu with which the waiter had presented him, and made a careful selection of what bade fair to be a tolerably lengthy dinner. Luigi took the order with the mixture of deference and approbation which marks the perfect waiter, and slipped away to give the necessary instructions. What with the increasing demands in the public restaurant, and the prospect of a *tête-à-tête* dinner in the room upstairs, his work was all cut out for him; but he contrived to keep abreast of it somehow, flying here and there on the slipshod shoes, and seeming to satisfy everyone at once, till Tamponi began to think seriously that Carlo's retirement had better be made permanent—in favour of Mr. Luigi Carfarelli.

THE COST OF WAR.

From the day when Achilles fasted three days and nights over the body of Patroclus, slain in the ten years' siege before the stout walls of Troy, have we learned of war's sorrows.

The Duke of Wellington wept like a child when he surveyed the bloody, hard-won field of Waterloo. Methuen, it is said, broke down at the ghastly sight of Magersfontein, and returned to his tent that the men might not witness his grief.

"Who dead is must be buried," says Homer, and, we might add, "who ill is must die."

So thought Private John Smith, living now at 19 South Uxbridge Street, Burton-on-Trent. The "Aurania" steamed out to the Cape on December 27th, 1899, with this soldier aboard her (that was before she steamed back with the gallant C.I.V.'s), and in telling me of his trials, on August 29th, 1900, Private Smith says that *that* part of his duty was pleasant enough.

"Shortly after Earl Roberts' famous march into Kronstadt, we were stationed between that town and Jacobsdal to guard the line of communication. Towards the end of April I was laid low with that fell disease enteric fever.

"There were hundreds of men down with it. It has laid low more men than all the shot and shell that was ever fired by Boer Artillery. For several weeks I was in the fever hospital. My stomach was converted into a manufactury of torturing pains, and I grew as weak and helpless as a new-born babe.

"I was for *days unconscious*, but gradually recovered sufficiently to be invalided home."

Yet the suffering of Private Smith was not over.

"I went aboard the Hospital Ship 'Nineveh' in June," he says, "and shortly afterwards sailed for home. During my short stay in South Africa, I lost over 20lbs. in weight. Nothing that I took relieved the constant vomiting, or increased my strength.

"After," he says, "I had been home a few days, my brother, who is an engine driver on the Midland Railway—not of *an armoured train*—advised me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle. I found it was doing me good. The vomiting *ceased*, and I was able to enjoy all kinds of food. My appetite is now enormous.

"Altogether I have taken four bottles of Mother Seigel's Syrup, and gladly give you permission to use and publish my statement. This syrup is a fine tonic and a great medicine for the stomach. I can especially recommend it *to soldiers returning from South Africa* in feeble health."

Wellington knew the bitter cost of war in 1815.

Methuen in 1899 and 1900.

And the hero of this narrative in 1900, too. His was a personal cost. "Green vomit," Charles Reade writes, "laid her sickly hand on him."

A broken man.—Until the kindly offices of Seigel's Curative Syrup put him on the stepping-stone of "first wealth," which is health.

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The room on the first floor was reached by a narrow flight of dingy stairs, which commenced at the bar end of the restaurant. It was one of two private rooms on the same landing which were used on occasion by parties whose business or pleasure did not demand the too close proximity of other *bons vivcurs*. It was the smaller apartment at the head of the stairs that had been retained by Mr. Tasker for the entertainment of his expected friend. The room was of such limited dimensions that there was not much space for furniture beyond the neatly-draped table in the centre. One side was nearly taken up by the lace-curtained window looking out on the Strand.

On the side near the door was a dinner waggon, and in the right-hand niche by the fireplace a battered piano stood, and that was all, except a few pictures of theatrical celebrities on the walls.

Luigi had managed between whiles to light the gas and arrange the table, and was busy among the downstairs customers again when once more the harsh voice of Tamponi was heard summoning him to the bar. Mr. Tasker was still there, and he was in the act of turning to shake hands with an elderly man who had just arrived—a shambling, yellow-visaged personage, dressed in seedy black, and having an eccentric trick of the eye. At this moment, while the waiter was taking Tamponi's instructions to show the gentlemen upstairs and serve dinner, the swing doors opened, and the same dirty little matchboy glided among the customers, proffering his wares right and left.

The audacity of the intruder produced a wonderful effect on Luigi. Slashing wildly with his doubled napkin, the waiter again cleared the lad out of the bar, and again when he returned breathless and triumphant, he was not without the spoils of victory. This time it was a scrap of paper, which Luigi held crushed in his left hand, while with the other he politely beckoned Mr. Tasker and his guest to the stairs. Standing aside to allow them to pass, the waiter followed them up, furtively examining his latest acquisition as he did so. There was just light enough on the stairs to read the two lines pencilled on the paper:

"Have come back from K. C. I dismantled strong room, pulled down all new brickwork, and took up flooring. Everything was solid. Found no money or anything else concealed. Young lady rather disappointed at failure. Hope you will have better success in other direction.

Ferguson."

On reaching the private room Luigi's smartness deserted him for the first time during his service at Tamponi's—that is to say, he was about two seconds late in taking the overcoat and umbrella which Tasker handed him. But his wool-gathering was of brief duration, and he made up for it by increased attention to the elder guest, relieving him of his greasy tall hat and black surtout with respectful alacrity. The waiter must not be blamed, because, being new to the place, he was some little time in finding the pegs whereon to hang his customer's outer garments, and consequently heard their opening conversation.

"I ran down by your suburban diggings as arranged, my young friend," said the elder of the two. "Your excellent slavey gave me your message to come on here at last, but I had a good deal of trouble in getting her to do so."

"What could the thick-headed idiot mean?" ejaculated Tasker angrily. "I left word plainly enough that I expected a gentleman to call, and that he was to be sent on to dine with me at Tamponi's."

"Gently, my dear young friend, gently," returned the other; "there was a certain amount of method in the wench's idiocy. In plain words, some person called at your Worcester Park lodgings and inquired for you some three hours before I arrived on the scene. Thinking that he was the intended recipient of your invitation, the maiden gave it to him, and naturally hesitated to give it twice over."

"Who on earth could it have been?" said Tasker, musingly. "It must have been either old Strauss himself or someone sent by him to see if I was really ill. It doesn't matter much if he has spotted me shamming. After to-night, drudgery at the desk ought to be a thing of the past for yours truly. Anyhow whatever it was he hasn't turned up here."

"In the phrase of our noble legislature, the main question had better be laid on the table, had it not, till the honourable member for the kitchen department has retired," said the elder significantly, and at the same moment Luigi having managed to find the hat-rack, disappeared to fetch the soup. When he returned, the conversation had taken a new drift, to be changed, however, rather abruptly on his re-entrance. But the waiter's shuffling shoes made very little noise on the stairs, and he was nearly into the room before his advent was noticed, thus hearing the concluding words of the previous subject. Fragments only reached him at first, growing clearer as he reached the door, in the droning voice of the eccentric-eyed man:

"No difficulty about that—no one within a mile—if necessary, must be silenced for ever—perhaps that would be the best in any case."

To which the younger man replied:

"Well, you are a caution! What, two in ten days? I'd rather make love to her than that, if she's as nice as you say," adding, with a yawn, as Luigi entered, "have you looked up the train?"

"Ten-thirty," said the other; "we have two hours to enjoy these excellent viands and to get to the station."

After handing the soup and uncorking the wine which Tasker had ordered, the waiter still lingered, seeming inclined to establish himself behind the host's chair.

"We don't want this fellow, eh, Hoathley?" said the latter. "We can ring when we want him," and in accordance with the other's gesture of assent the waiter was ordered to withdraw.

Down in the restaurant Luigi was kept busy among the diners, and it was not till he was nearly due to take the *entrées* up to the private room that he was able to obtain a moment's seclusion in the little wash-up pantry behind the stairs.

Going to the gas jet that flared over the sink, he carefully examined the back of his left hand, and proceeded to detach several minute hairs that were adhering to his knuckles. Placing these in a screw of paper, he put them away in his waistcoat pocket, muttering to himself as he did so:

"Cat's fur, no doubt; and now for the name."

Quickly producing from somewhere about his person a printed sheet, he scanned it line by line, till his eyes rested on a name not far from the bottom of the paper. The sheet was a passenger-list of the steamship *Trojan*, more than a year old, and the name on which the waiter fastened with such hawk-like avidity was that of Simon Hoathley.

(To be continued next week)

What are Canapes?

Why, slices of toast cut in fanciful forms and suitably garnished.

There are many other definitions of cookery terms in

Isobel's Home Cookery

For MAY.

- - ONE PENNY. - -

Next week's "Short Stories" will tell you about the "G. D."

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 3rd. Post-cards only, please. The prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Miss A. Newton, Carshalton House, Johnson Street, Norwich, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

CORONER: "Was the victim conscious when you reached him?" Pat: "Yis, sor; he wor. But, bechune us, I don't belave he knew ut."

TORMENT: "I had a fight yesterday with the boy next door." Father: "Yes; his father called at my office to-day about it." Torment: "I hope you came out as well as I did."

"JANE, did you break the water-bottle?" "Yes, m'm; but, fortunately, I broke it into only three pieces." "Fortunately! How's that fortunate?" "Oh, m'm, when a thing breaks into many pieces, it is hard to pick them all up!"

PATIENT: "As we have known each other so long, doctor, I do not intend to insult you by paying your bill. But I have left you a handsome legacy in my will." Physician: "Very kind of you, I'm sure. Allow me to look at that prescription again. I wish to make a slight alteration in it."

A ST. HELEN'S boy had always declined to eat oatmeal, although his mother had urged it upon him as a strengthening diet. Suddenly he surprised her one morning by eating a liberal plateful and calling for "more." When she asked for an explanation he replied: "I am bound to eat oatmeal till I get strong enough to thrash Georgy Scott."

MRS. BROWN: "Anything for me?" Rural Postmaster: "I don't see nothin'." Mrs. Brown: "I was expectin' a letter or postcard from Aunt Sally Spriggs, tellin' what day she was comin'." Rural Postmaster (calling to his wife): "Did ye see a postcard from Mrs. Brown's Aunt Sally, tellin' what day she was comin'?" His Wife: "Yes, she's comin' Thursday."

* A NORFOLK clergyman tells an amusing anecdote in connection with his first marriage fee. As soon as the ceremony was ended, he stepped forward to imprint the customary salute on the bride's cheek, when the groom intervened. "Noa yeou don't, parson," he said sheepishly. "I kin du thet myself." The parson gracefully yielded the point, and the groom gave the bride a resounding smack on her lips. Then turning to the clergyman he said: "Yeou bean't married, hey? No? Well, if so be as yeou care to du without the fee yeou kin kiss her oncet!" As the parson dare not run the risk of making himself unpopular at the outset he gallantly kissed the lady, whilst the groom complacently pocketed the fee and withdrew with his bride.

IF some men were as big as they feel, they would have to live out of doors.

"Do you enjoy good health?" "Of course. Did you ever know anyone who didn't enjoy good health?" "Yes, the doctors."

TEACHER: "If you are polite and kind to young comrades, what will be the result?" Bully Jones: "They'll know they can lick you."

THE School of Philosophy has not yet determined what a woman should do when her hands are in the dough-pan and an aggressive fly alights on her nose.

SHE: "Oh! Mr. Smith, won't you recite for us this evening?" He: "Really, there will be so many strangers present that—ah——" "Oh! don't mind them; they'll be gone before you're half-finished."

"THAT young Softleigh asked me for your hand to-day?" "And what did you say to him, papa, dear?" "I told him your mother needed both in the washing-tub, but I compromised with him by giving him my foot."

"WHEN I started at your age," said a father to his son, "I arrived in Glasgow with half-a-crown in my pocket. And just to prove to you how determined I was to add to my store I never even changed it." "Perhaps it was a bad one," ventured the young hopeful.

AMATEUR FARMER: "Mr. Green, there seems to be something serious the matter with the horse I bought of you yesterday. He coughs and wheezes distressingly, and I think perhaps he is broken-winded. What would you advise me to do?" Horse Dealer (promptly): "Sell him as quickly as you can; jes' like I did."

"WHEN I was once in danger from a lion," said an old African explorer, "I tried sitting down and staring at him, as I had no weapons." "How did it work?" asked his companion. "Perfectly; the lion didn't even offer to touch me." "Strange! How do you account for it?" "Well, sometimes I've thought it was because I sat down on a branch of a very tall tree."

"THAT was a terrible affair which happened on our railway this morning," began the boy who travels by rail to school. "What was that?" asked several voices. "Why," exclaimed the narrator, "the entire train passed over four men and a young woman!" "They were instantaneously killed, of course?" chorussed the listeners. "No," said the narrator, "miraculous as it may seem, not one was injured. They were under a bridge when the train passed over it!" It was probably a good thing for that youthful storyteller that he cleared out of the playground rapidly.

AN Irishman was working on a new railway a short time since, and one pay day he said to the ganger: "Do you want any more hands, sor, for I've a brother at home that wants a job at wurruk." The ganger asked him what sort of a workman his brother was. "Faith, sor," Pat replied, "he's as good a man as meself." "All right," said the ganger; "tell him to come and start on Monday." "Whoile I'm axing you for my brother, there's me poor old father at home wanting a job at the same time, yor honour." "Well, what sort of a man is your father, Pat?" "Be jabers, sor, he's as good a man as the two of us." "Oh, well," said the ganger, "tell your father to come, and you and your brother can stay away."

Next week "Short Stories" will tell you about the "G. D."

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

Dotted about in various parts of this number, you will have perceived, if you are endowed with average powers of vision, certain references to the "G. D." Furthermore, if you be endowed with the average amount of curiosity, you may have wondered what "G. D." stands for.

I am going to enlighten you—later on. Meantime, if you are hard up for something to do, you might very well beguile the time by asking your friends if they know what the "G. D." is. If they don't, you might tell them that they will be able to find out by looking at next week's *Short Stories*.

I may here remark that the "G. D." is not a patent medicine, nor is it a new sort of roller skate or tobacco. The "G. D.," as a matter of fact, is—but thereby hangs a tale.

❦❦❦

And so, "W. W. D." (Swindon), you thought you had caught your worried, overworked editor napping. You thought that in writing "All that *glisters* is not gold," I had misquoted. As a matter of fact, although the word "glitters" is used more frequently in speech, the more accurate editions of Shakespeare contain the word I used. Look at Act II., Scene 7, of *The Merchant of Venice* for yourself and see. Excuse this mild editorial cock-a-doodle-doo, won't you?

❦❦❦

By the way, "W. W. D.," do *you* know what the "G. D." is?

❦❦❦

"Millie" (Crewe).—A queer kind of courtship is observed in certain parts of Burmah. If a man falls in love with a girl he seats himself at a certain distance from her for hours at a time, and steadily glares at her. If the girl feels disposed to encourage his suit, she looks at him occasionally, and if the young fellow perseveres for a day or two, she will finally nod and smile at him, as a sign that he can go to her parents and arrange the marriage settlements.

❦❦❦

"Esther A." sends me the following remarks, prefaced by the query, "Why can't men pack?"

"A woman will take the smallest drawer in the house for her own private use, and will pack away in it bright bits of boxes of all shades and sizes, dainty fragments of ribbon and scraps of lace, foamy ruffles, velvety things for the neck, bundles of old love-letters, pieces of jewellery, handkerchiefs, things that no man knows the name of, all sorts of fresh-looking, bright little traps that you could not catalogue in a column, and any hour of the day or night she can go to that drawer and pick up any article she wants without disturbing anything else; whereas a man, having the biggest, deepest, and widest drawer assigned to him, will throw into it three socks, a collar-box, an old necktie, two handkerchiefs, and a pipe, and to save his life he cannot shut that drawer without leaving more ends of things sticking out than there are things in it."

❦❦❦

Some weeks ago, I commented on the matter of people who are tone deaf. A colonial reader sends me this interesting communication on the same subject:

"Mr. Gladstone had no taste for music whatsoever, cared nothing for it, and knew nothing about it. The writer remembers that upon the occasion of the meeting in St. James' Palace which led to the founding of the Royal College of Music, Mr. Gladstone was one of the speakers, along with the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke of Albany, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Salisbury, etc. The ex-Premier then confessed his utter inability to appreciate music—his total lack of ear for it. He said that he had tried to cultivate a taste for music, but simply could not, because he was not constituted that way. This is one of the phases of a great man's intellect that is worthy of note."

❦❦❦

There are poets who read *Short Stories*, and satirists at that. Here is a sample of verse sent me:

At Eastbourne Beach.

May Miller on an August day
For a holiday went away.

Her box was full of lingerie,
And evening gowns of *point d'esprit*,

Of high-heeled boots and blucher ties,
And hosiery to dazzle eyes.

To Eastbourne beach she went, and met
Young Mr. Rudge, with eyes of jet.

Gay Mr. Rudge, who wore each hour
A London suit and London flower.

An heiress—Eastbourne called her fair,
And him a multi-millionaire.

They drove together, danced each night,
And Eastbourne watched the handsome sight.

Then suddenly they went away,
He left one night—she left one day.

And Eastbourne gossip said of her
She was a little stenographer.

And he—it really seemed too hard—
Sold damask linens by the yard.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 4,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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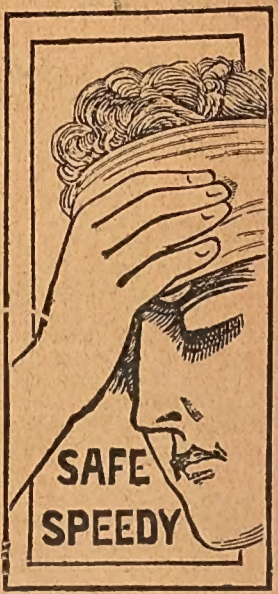

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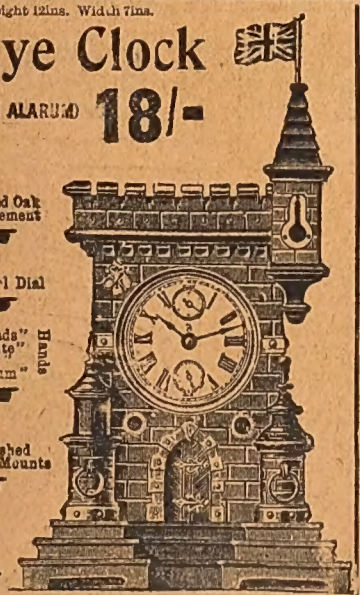

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